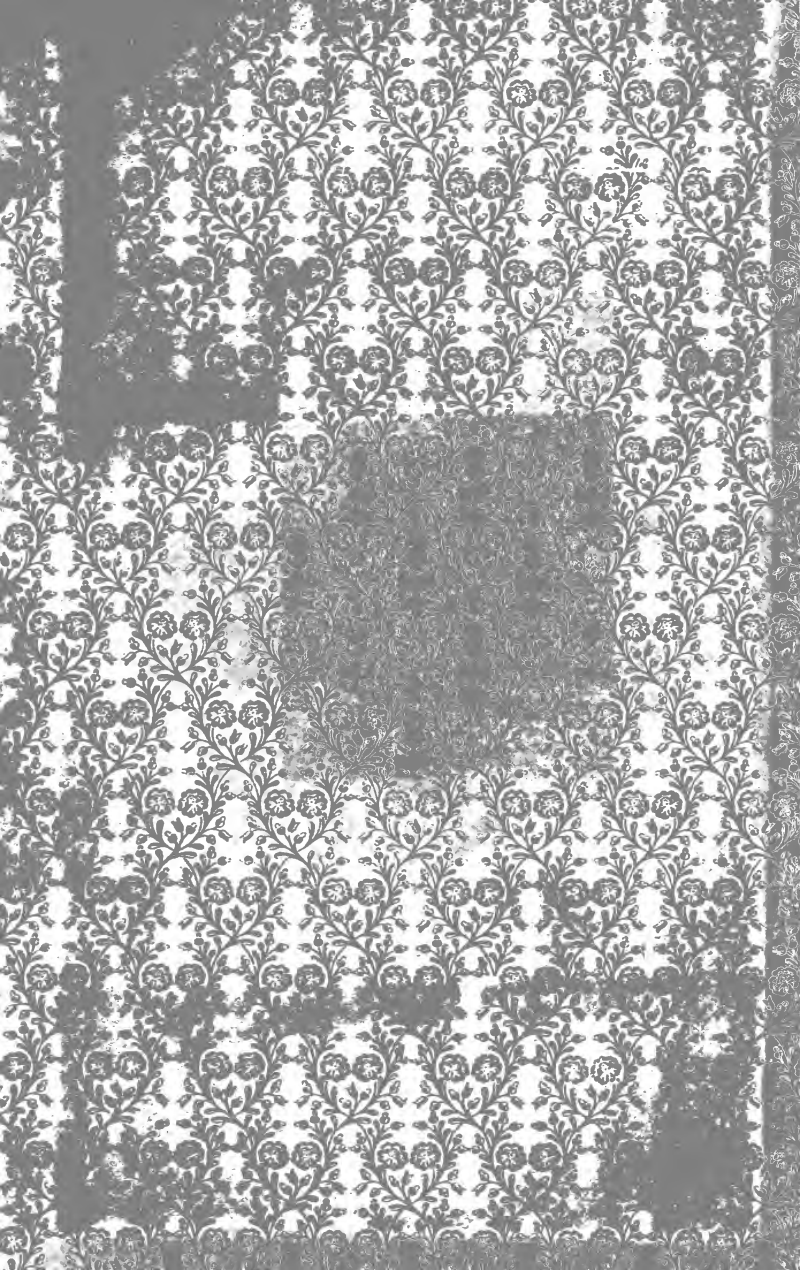


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THE CONVICT SHIP

BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF

'THE WRECK OF THE GROSVENOR' 'MY SHIPMATE LOUISE'

'THE PHANTOM DEATH' ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES—VOL. III.

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THE CONVICT SHIP

CHAPTER XXXIV

SHE WITNESSES THE DEPARTURE OF THE OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS

By this time the awning had been spread. In the cuddy a crowd of convicts were roaring out the chorus of some vulgar popular song of that time. Will said: 'We have had nothing to eat. Aren't you hungry?'

'Here, you!' exclaimed Tom to the fellow at the helm. 'Jump below to the cuddy and bring us some food and wine to breakfast off. I'll not trust this young gentleman amongst them. You're known as a friend. Johnstone, hold the wheel.'

The man went like a dog to the companion-hatch and disappeared down it.

'A worthy example of the British sailor,'

said Tom. 'He's one of those fellows who'd swear a man's life and liberty away for a noggin of rum. D'ye see that boat, Marian?' He pointed to a long thin boat, called the captain's gig, that hung by davits over the stern, with the line of her gunwale on a level with the taffrail. 'She'll give us our chance. Johnstone, that'll be the boat we'll make off in. The sooner the better. Hark to them below! Oh, my dear heart, what has your love for me brought you into? Johnstone, the equipment of that boat will be your duty. I shall hold you responsible for everything being in its place when we come to want her.'

'Aye, aye, sir,' answered the lad, with the habit of a sailor in answer to an order.

'Is it true, Tom, that they'd hang you if they found you in command of this ship?' said I.

'There's been murder and piracy, and the ringleaders would be hanged, and I, found in command of the ship, would be reckoned a ringleader. But do not fear. They're not going to catch me. We'll be out of the vessel

soon, though heaven help the unhappy ruffians when it comes to our leaving them.'

Presently the sailor came up out of the cuddy. He brought a bottle of sherry, a broken tumbler, a plate of white biscuit, and some tinned meat. He said sullenly, as he put the stuff down on the grating, that it was all he could find. There wasn't a whole tumbler to be seen.

'Them convicts is gone mad,' he said, as he sulkily grasped the wheel. 'Them as ain't singing's fighting. The cabin floor's a-running with blood. They're mostly the young 'uns. I never bargained for the likes of this raree-show. What's a-going to befall the fired ship if this sort of carrying-on's to last?'

'It was to be a roasting hot job,' said I, pointing to the injured topgallantmast.

He gave me an evil look, but, meeting Tom's eyes, turned his head and stared away into the white, sultry, stagnant distance. I kept my back upon the bloodstains; I could not have held them in view and tasted food. Whilst we ate and drank we heard Mr.

Bates calling out orders on the main-deck. I met Tom's glance; he faintly smiled; it was the first time I had seen him smile. But, indeed, the tragedy of the morning became a kind of burlesque, when you thought of the chief mate of the ship, dressed as a convict, giving orders under the eye of Barney Abram, who was himself clothed in the apparel of the captain.

We moved forward a little way to get well into the shelter of the awning and out of hearing of the fellow at the wheel. The bottle had been half full. We emptied it and threw it and the broken tumbler overboard, and talked whilst we watched the motions of the convicts on the main-deck and listened to the choruses of the brutal revellers in the cuddy. Some of the mutinous sailors went aloft with tackles on the main and fore-yards; meanwhile a number of the convicts cleared away the long-boat, a large, squab fabric which lay stowed forward of the galley. Tom said she was big enough to safely carry forty souls.

'I wish you and I and Will there were in

her,' said he, out of sight of this ship. But she'll provide us with the opportunity we want,' he added, with a sideway motion of his head towards the gig over the stern.

'What are your plans after we leave the ship?' said I. 'The gig's a little boat for this vast sea.'

'My plans,' he answered, making as if he would take my hand, and arresting the gesture with a fierce glance at the helmsman, 'are first of all to get away. The rest must be our fortune. Anyhow, we'll endeavour to keep afloat till we're picked up.'

'It might run into weeks before we fall in with a ship just here,' said Will, 'and what's to happen then? It's very well for Marian and me—what's to become of you, sir?'

'What's to become of Tom?' cried I. 'If you mean that, you must ask what's to become of me too.'

Tom stood up and said: 'The convicts mustn't see us always together, and particularly will it not do for them to see us talking earnestly. They're felons, with the suspicions

and passions of felons. I'm going to the captain's cabin.'

He walked briskly to the companion-way, at which he paused to look steadily round the sea, and then disappeared.

'Why do you take me up so sharply, Marian?' said Will.

'Call me Marlowe. Suppose you should be overheard? Sharply? Why do you ask what's to become of Tom? It never could be right with me if it's to be wrong with him. And yet you say it'll be all right for you and me if we're picked up.'

'If we're picked up he may be carried to England. What then?'

'We'll not allow ourselves to be picked up by a ship going to England.'

'We may be nearly dead with thirst and without provisions. Look what a sea it is! Do you know where we are? This is the junction of the two Atlantics. If you are dying of thirst you'll be glad to be picked up, though the ship we should fall in with were bound to—to——' And my cousin, with an expressive face, pointed downward.

‘Don’t talk to me. Leave it all to Tom. He is an old sailor, and will he risk the liberty he has got this day? I would sink and drown in his arms sooner than stay in this detestable ship, or not be by his side wherever he goes!’

‘Aye, that’s all very well. But I’m to make one in the boat, remember. I’m very sorry for Butler, and like him greatly, although hang me if I think his prison experience has improved his manners. But I don’t see my way to go down hand in hand with him.’

‘Hold your tongue!’ I cried. ‘The darling saved your life, and this is your gratitude!’

He got up and walked aft, and stood looking at the gig.

I walked to the poop-rail and gazed down at the mass of convicts who filled the decks. Some of them were throwing the remains of the barricades overboard. A considerable group stood near the port gangway, and every one of that gang carried a soldier’s musket, with its bayonet fixed. Some of those fellows had acted as first and second

‘captains’ under the doctor. They were now less noisy in the cuddy ; a few in that interior did, indeed, continue to drunkenly shout out choruses. Here and there a felon roamed with lurching steps, and often with a cut face and blood upon him as though from a savage scuffle ; but I soon noticed that if this sort of fellows got into the people’s way they were elbowed and kicked without ceremony even to the extent of being thrown headlong. Most of the noisiest and the wounded people were young. In truth, already was I sensible of a change in the bearing of the unhappy men. They stood in bodies watching what was going forward. The first clamorous, brutal transports, the early delirious passions which successful rebellion and the possession of freedom had excited, were sobering. Perhaps they had not met with drink enough yet to make them all the fierce, wild, shouting, exulting demons some of them had been changed into by the cuddy drams. Be this as it may, there was less confusion ; the senseless bawling had become rare. On deck, the shouts broke only from the throats of

tipsy scoundrels aimlessly issuing out of the cuddy into the quarter-deck throng, where, as I have said, they would be hustled and kicked, and sometimes forced into silence by being knocked down.

Mr. Bates, no longer distinguishable from the felons who remained clothed in the convicts' garb, stood at the gangway, superintending the hoisting and lowering of the long-boat over the side. Some of the convicts worked as though they had been sailors in their day. Close beside the little mass of armed men stood Barney Abram, and near him were five or six convicts, variously attired in plundered clothes. These fellows were, without exception, of the better class of prisoners. Most of them had filled positions of some little trust under the doctor, such as cook and barber, and I guessed that they were among the recognised heads of the risen criminals.

Will joined me and began to talk of the gig and the difficulty of safely lowering a boat hanging athwartships when a vessel was in motion. I bid him leave everything to

Tom and do as he was told—that is, to see that the gig was furnished ready for getting away in. He burst into a laugh at sight of Mr. Bates, and for some time could not recover his composure; in truth, the poor fellow seemed a little hysterical, and after we had been standing a few minutes drew me away, saying; ‘Let’s go over to starboard; the sentry was killed just here, and I keep on seeing his face as they threw him over the side.’

Several of the convicts came out of the cuddy by way of the companion-hatch and, finding the poop a clear deck, began to play at leap-frog and to gambol and hop and cut capers with the grace of frisky cart-horses. Their ugly faces and rowdy behaviour made a slum or back alley of that white deck. The beauty of the sea, the brilliance of the blue heavens, the fiery sparkles and lights in the polished brass and glass about the poop vanished. Those tumbling convicts instantly brought with them a flavour of London fog. The air resounded with the cry of the costermonger; an evil odour of decayed vegetables

attended them, and you seemed to hear the music of the barrel-organ.

They came floundering and skylarking and caper-cutting up to where Will and I were standing; they gathered about us, and Will was for moving off, but I held my ground; I did not love their language, believe me, but it would not do to seem shy of them. They were flushed with drink, and talked rapidly and thickly in the most intolerable, coarse speech you can imagine; yet they were not so drunk as to be unintelligible. Seemingly they had been amongst the most successful in plundering the cabins. One pulled out Captain Sutherland's gold watch, and, dangling it on high by its chain as though playing at bob-cherry, roared out: 'This is the thumble! Here's the yack for a nob's gurrell!' Another produced a pin, a third a large old-fashioned silver watch, which Will whispered had belonged to the second mate. Their talk was a compound of oaths and thieves' slang, but they took not the least notice of me or Will; they jabbered hoarsely and thickly and swiftly amongst themselves,

as though on the eve of coming to blows, breaking off presently, however, to watch the long-boat rising out of her chocks when the tackles were manned by some score or two of felons.

The great boat was got over as smartly as though all concerned, in lifting and lowering her were sailors. All necessary information as to where stores, fresh water, and so forth were to be found had doubtless been obtained from Mr. Bates. Anyhow, no time had been lost, but soon after the boat had been floated a number of people, under the superintendence of some of those men whom I had taken to be the leaders, rolled a cask of fresh water, a tierce or two of beef, two or three barrels of flour and biscuit, and other matters which my memory does not carry, to the open gangway, and very rapidly all these things were stored in the boat alongside.

Just then Tom came out of the cuddy by way of the quarter-deck, and went to Bates and Barney Abram, who stood together, with whom he spoke. Tom, attended by Bates, returned to the cuddy, and after an interval

reappeared with a sextant-case, a chart or two, and such appliances as I supposed they would need in the long-boat to enable them to steer a course for land. These things were handed down to some convicts who were stowing the provisions in the boat. Tom stood in the gangway and looked down, and then called out for the oars, sail, and mast of the boat to be brought along and shipped. When he had seen to this, he glanced up, and, observing me, ascended the poop-ladder.

‘Hi!’ said he, walking up to the group of convicts, who had been talking and swearing and boasting of their plunder, but were now silent. ‘What are you doing here? This is no part of the ship for you!’ he cried, cursing them. ‘Get away down to your quarters! This poop is for the captain and the mate and Mr. Abram, and the rest of us, who are responsible for the safety of the vessel, and for landing you where you may bolt and get hanged at your leisure. Off with ye! Off with ye!’ And laying old of the sturdiest he gave him a thrust.

The convicts were used to this sort of

usage, and probably would have recognised no other treatment than that of kicks and curses. They yielded as submissively as felons to the command of an armed warder, went in a body down the ladder, and mingled with their fellows on the main deck.

‘Those people below must be sent adrift,’ said Tom, coming to my side and talking as though he thought aloud. ‘It’s a hardship, but I see the need. If they’re kept, they’ll be murdered. They start well equipped—I’ve seen to that. It’s odds if they’re not picked up in a day or two, spite of our friend Will’s misgivings. They’ll take three boats from the ship. That’ll leave two and the gig. The gig’s for us. The convicts must see to themselves. It’s not a thing to be debated. It’s every man for himself at such times as these,’ and his eye went to the stain at the head of the poop ladder where the sentry had been butchered.

‘Tom,’ said I, ‘if the sailors are leaving the ship, who’s to carry on the work?’

‘Seven or eight rogues stay,’ he answered. ‘Four or five of the convicts have been to

sea. With near two hundred and fifty souls in the ship, I should be able to manage if I chose to keep by her. How many of the crew went to your complement?' said he, turning to Will.

'Thirty, sir,' answered the lad.

'All told?'

'Thirty ordinary and able seamen and idlers,' said Will.

'They looked a ruffianly lot!' exclaimed Tom. 'The people counted upon more help than they got. Abram asked all hands to remain; only seven or eight chums and acquaintances of the prisoners stick to the ship. Those were the scoundrels who flung themselves upon the sentries. Yes, they'll need two quarter-boats besides the long-boat. A numerous family to send afloat, and under the line, too, with—how many women and children?'

Will gave him the number.

Tom made a grimace of pity, folded his arms and stood, with a stern face, watching what was happening in the gangway.

Mr. Bates was showing the convicts how

to rig the accommodation-ladder over the side. I looked at Tom, and particularly noticed the change in his face, just as I had felt and witnessed the change in his nature and bearing. That change I had before observed, but not so clearly. The light was searching. He stood in repose, forgetting himself and viewing the proceedings on the main-deck. He was pale and thin and ill and haggard, yet his manly beauty lacked none of its old charms. Nay, there was a gain, I thought. He seemed the handsomer because of the severity of his expression. There was a fierceness that gave his lineaments a heroic cast. Suffering had deepened and accentuated all that was manly in his looks by an infusion of sternness that wanted not in scorn and haughtiness.

When all was ready with the long-boat, the armed convicts formed themselves into a lane betwixt the open gangway and the hatchway. They fell in with the precision of soldiers to the cries which commanded them, and stood erect and orderly, every man letting the butt of his musket rest upon

the deck. A crowd of men, many of them armed with the small-arms which they had found in the ship, gathered around the main-hatch and obstructed the view. A fellow, with a fiddle in his hand, climbed on the bulwark-rail close to the yawn of the gangway, and putting the fiddle into his neck, screwed out a tune. He was the convict who used to play the prisoners round the decks at exercise. When the mass of felons heard this music, they burst into a great shout of laughter. Such a wild, dreadful shout of merriment has seldom gone up out of human throats. The few remaining revellers in the cuddy tumbled drunkenly out on the quarter-deck on hearing the fiddle and the shouts, and rent the air with another hideous burst of laughter.

I heard a man bawl instructions down the main-hatchway, but could not catch what he said. Abram and some others roared out an order for silence, and, tipsy as a number of them were, as great a stillness fell upon the convicts as ever had been observed in their time of discipline.

The first to come up was Doctor Russell-Ellice ; he was dressed as a convict, and I did not recognise him until Will cried out. He was immediately followed by Captain Sutherland, who had also been forced into the felon's garb. Next came Captain Barrett, dressed as a convict ; then the sergeant and the soldiers of the guard, most of whom were habited in the prison apparel, though some were without coats. Neither the doctor nor the officers looked to right or left. They kept their eyes fastened upon the deck, and so passed through the rows of armed criminals to the gangway. Nothing was to be heard but the insulting squeaking music of the fiddle. The hush upon the great throng of men made the scene tragically impressive. I felt a deep pity for Captain Sutherland, and asked Tom in a whisper if his influence could not keep the poor fellow on board that he might escape with us if we got away ; but Tom, without looking at me, held up his hand to warn me not to speak.

I went to the side and looked down at the long-boat. She was a large, roomy fabric,

and sat high and buoyant despite her liberal equipment of food and water. These passed into her : the surgeon, the commander of the vessel, Captain Barrett, and eighteen soldiers, two of their number having been killed. They were all, as I have said, habited as convicts ; and now I observed the degrading effect of the prison-dress upon the person, for the doctor, Captain Barrett, and most of the soldiers looked as sorry a set of rogues as any that were in the ship, and needed but irons and the barber to make you suppose them criminals of the most desperate kind.

A pause in the proceedings happened when the last of the soldiers had passed down the ladder and entered the boat. Abram shouted to the fiddler to stop his noise. So great was the silence among the convicts that everything said clearly reached the ear. The prize-fighter went into the gangway and looked over, and, turning to some of the people whom I had taken to be among the chiefs and ringleaders, called out : ‘ There is roob for as bady agaid.’

Tom and Will came to the rail and looked

down at the boat. The doctor sat in the stern-sheets with arms folded and head bowed. He exhibited no signs of life. Captain Sutherland's posture was that of a crushed and broken-hearted man. I grieved and could have wept and entreated for the poor fellow; he was a good, harmless sailor, an excellent seaman, and his usage was barbarous, seeing that the convicts had no other cause to punish him and revenge themselves than his being in command of the ship.

When Abram called out as I have just said, Captain Barrett sprang to his feet and shouted: 'Where are my men's wives and children? You're not going to send us adrift without them, are you?'

'We'll forward 'eb od to you later!' exclaimed Abram, turning his head without turning his body and shouting with his massive hand at the side of his mouth: 'Jodsud'—here he addressed a convict named Johnson, one of several armed men who guarded the entrance of the main hatch; it was this Johnson who had bawled down to the doctor and others to come up—'there's

roob for twedy bore id the lo'g boat! Call 'eb up!'

Tom made a stride to the head of the poop-ladder, and, in a voice whose accents rang through the ship like a volley of pistol shots, shouted: 'Hold! Abram, the next to come up and enter the long-boat are the women and children!'

The mass of convicts looked up at him; indescribable was the effect of this universal turning of faces one way.

'Dot lo'g ago you wouldn't 'ave anything to do with this busidess!' shouted Abram savagely. 'What wasn't your busidess thed isd't goi'g to be your busidess dow!'

'I'll have no discussion!' cried Tom with the utmost ferocity. 'I'm a man of my word. Blood has been shed, and now you want to round off the murders with the most hellish piece of separation ever perpetrated on the high seas. We have lived together,' he cried to them all in clear, fierce, powerful tones, 'for many months, in the hulk and here, and I know there are scores amongst you who detest the thought of keeping poor women

and little children from their husbands, whose sole offence has been their duty. Am I right? You are under the influence of men who, as your responsible leaders, elected by yourselves, should be the last to advise you to blacken yet what, God knows, is black enough, by a fiendish act of brutality and inhumanity!’

‘We don’t want to be jawed,’ bawled a tipsy convict. ‘Better bring the doctor aboard again if that’s to be the lay.’

‘Butler,’ shouted Abram, ‘I’ve blowed if you’re goi’g to have your way id everythi’g!’

‘But I’ll have my way in this! I’ll have my way in this!’ cried Tom with a note of madness in his voice and the look of a madman in his face. ‘You begged me to take charge. Fifty of you whined and petitioned me, as the only navigator amongst you, to command this ship if you seized her. And I consented—on what terms? No cruelty, I said, and safety for three friends. There’s to be cruelty now—cruelty so hellish that the vilest heart amongst you must sicken and shrink if it will but give the intention a

thought. You're playing me false in this, Abram. I say—don't do it! Don't do it!' he cried, raising his voice and brandishing his arms at the great mob below.

I glanced at the long-boat at this moment. The doctor had pricked his ears and was sitting looking up at the ship with a pale face of astonishment. Captain Barrett, erect in the boat, listened and stared. Captain Sutherland repeated three or four times: 'Who is it? Who is it?' For Tom was not to be seen by them; indeed, nobody was visible along the whole line of the ship to those people low-seated save Abram at the gangway and the fiddler and me and Will at the rail.

Some fellow near the mainmast hoarsely shouted: 'Butler wants it all his own way. Let him chuck it and rot! There's Bates, the mate of the ship. He's be'n kep' to oblige Butler. He's a navigator. He'll do the trick'

'No!' thundered Bates, roaring out as though he were hailing the fore-topsail in a gale of wind. 'You've forced me into giving orders, and I'm cursing myself for my

cowardice. But so help me, you men, as I stand here, one and all of you, good and bad, drunk and sober, as you listen, sooner than that you shall keep the women and children on the chance of my taking Butler's place, you may now—now—now,' he roared, pointing up, 'turn to and reeve your yardarm whip and run me aloft. D'ye hear me! Now—*now!*' he screamed, in the extremity of his wrath and resolution, and having spoken he backed from the knot of convicts out of the thick of whom he had exclaimed, put his shoulders against the bulwark, folded his arms and settled himself firmly on his legs as a man prepared for the worst, and at that instant he made as heroic a figure as Tom.

Silence followed. The hush was extraordinary. The deep stillness that lay upon the white ocean seemed to come into the ship as a spirit. I saw that Abram was at a loss. He looked savagely about him and made an angry step or two as though he would pace the deck. Tom, gripping the brass rail, kept his eyes, full of fire, upon Abram; his breast rose and fell violently with the vehemence of

his breathing. Resolution as fearless and magnificent as the chief mate had given expression to was visible in his posture and looks, and not the grossest and most ignorant of the unhappy creatures who stared up could have mistaken his mind.

He seemed to wait for Abram to speak, then cried out, addressing the mass of men generally: 'Is it your wish that I should navigate this ship and carry you to where we shall presently decide?'

Most of the fellows stared at one another like fools, as though they lacked courage to answer.

'Answer me, any of you!' he shouted. 'Don't think I care how it goes. Treat me as you've dealt with those whose blood stains these decks, and I'll thank you. I'm a convict—the most wretched of the wretches among you—and broken-hearted as none of you are. Use me as you will. But if I take charge, I'm captain; and if I'm captain, my will in what concerns the general safety is law. The general safety will be imperilled by the detention of the women and children.

I, a fellow-convict and seaman, tell you this. Now answer me: Am I in command or not?’

‘It was settled!’ howled Abram.

‘Johnson!’ cried Tom. ‘You at the hatchway there! Order the women and children on deck and pass them into the boat!’

Johnson kept silent.

‘Do what you’re told!’ shouted a voice. Then followed a hoarse, confused uproar from fifty throats: ‘Get ’em out of the ship!’ ‘Butler’s right! Who the plague wants to keep them?’ ‘It’ll lead to murder, and we want our liberty ashore.’

‘Order the women and children on deck!’ cried Tom; whereupon some man—but it was not the convict Johnson—bellowed down the main hatch.

In a few minutes the women came up out of the ’tweendecks one by one, every woman with a child in her arms, for there were eight and eight, though every woman was not a mother. The poor creatures’ eyes were red with weeping, their faces white with fear. The husband of one of them had been killed

that morning. They were dressed in bonnets and shawls. My heart was cold as I watched them. They went to the side and passed one by one down the gangway ladder; the great crowd of convicts looked on. Not a word was uttered whilst the women walked through the lane of armed men. As they entered the boat, their husbands eagerly clasped and kissed them and kissed the children; it was like a meeting of the survivors of some terrible disaster, and the tears stood in my eyes.

The boat seemed crowded when the women were in her, though, at a pinch, another ten or twelve persons might have found space.

‘Off with you dow and bake roob for the other boats!’ shouted Abram. ‘Head right away and be th’kful you’ve falled idto the ’a’ds of hubade people! If you ha’g about dear us, s’elp be Peter, we’ll fire idto you!’

A soldier seized an oar and shoved the boat off. When she had gone clear by her own length, the soldiers threw over the remaining oars and began to row. It was about one o’clock in the afternoon; a long

morning had been spent in getting that big boat out, storing, crowding, and sending her adrift. I looked around the sea; not the least breath of air anywhere dyed the molten resplendent surface that brimmed in a breast of delicate blue silver light into the morning distances. The soldiers rowed vigorously, as though all in the boat feared the convicts would play them some murderous trick if they hung within reach.

A number of people got on the line of bulwark-rail and watched the boat as she drew away. I had thought to hear a hundred vile, blasphemous insults flung after her, but nothing was said in that way. The fellows laughed and talked and pointed, but no man called out.

Barney Abram came on the poop, followed by Mr. Bates, as though the mate had been ordered to attend. The sweat was running from the prize-fighter's face, and the scars about his brow and forehead were knitted into a scowl. My heart beat fast. I dreaded a quarrel between him and Tom, for Abram swung the deadliest fist of any man in England.

Greatly to my relief, however, spite of his dark and sweating face, which seemed to give the lie to his behaviour, his manner was conciliatory.

‘You shouldn’t lose your tepper so easily, Butler,’ said he. ‘What’s the good of exciti’g yourself? You start this gentlebud off’—here he motioned to Mr. Bates—‘who talks a lot of rot to the people about yardarbs. I walked hib rou’d the deck to oblige you, that the people bight see he’s by fr’e’d; and thed, excited by you, he jaws theb about yardarbs. If they had taken hib at his word!’ He looked up, and pointing, exclaimed with his extraordinary smirking grin: ‘That’s what I thi’k you gentlebud of the sea call a yardarb. Gallus high, ain’t it, by rosebud?’ And he turned his fiery black eyes upon me.

‘The women are safe, and I’m satisfied,’ answered Tom. ‘Abram, I had looked for more humanity at your hands. You—a man of your reputation,’ he added, with an angry, sarcastic smile that instantly faded, ‘to truckle to such beasts as we’ve had to live amongst

ever since we've found ourselves together in irons ; but the matter's ended,' he exclaimed, with a sort of sudden bustle and hurry in his manner. 'Let's get the other boats away. There's a destination to be settled and arrangements for working the ship to be made. This weather is good for talk, but it may change in an hour.'

'Right,' exclaimed Abram. 'Bates, call up your bed and give your orders.'

'Captain Butler,' exclaimed the poor mate, 'let me leave this ship with the crew.'

Abram fiercely rounded upon him. 'Is this your gratitude?' he exclaimed in his thick stunted accents. 'Didn't I tell you, Butler, he wasn't to be trusted? Wolves tear hib! Why don't the flat-catcher dow whed he's well off?'

'You're here and you'll remain here, Bates,' said Tom, giving the unfortunate man an expressive look. 'Get those two quarter-boats alongside and have them provisioned, and let me advise you to take a sheepshank in your tongue.'

Mr. Bates went to the rail and called to

the men. Some seamen and convicts came tumbling on to the poop.

‘We’ve got hib and we’ll keep hib,’ said Abram, pulling off the captain’s cap and wiping his brow with the captain’s pocket-handkerchief, and straddling in front of Tom, a massive, terrible figure. ‘Butler, you was right. I’ve beed turdi’g it over. You card’t be singleaddled. Suppose you should die. We’d let hib understa’d what betrayal ’ud cost. But what’s the good of getti’g excited? Dever lose your tepper. If I couldn’t keep by tepper’—and here he spoke with his eyes fixed on me—‘what ’u’d be by reputatiod as a public bad?’

CHAPTER XXXV

SHE LISTENS TO THE CONVICTS DEBATING

TOM and the prize-fighter talked together whilst Mr. Bates got the boats alongside and superintended the stowage of provisions and water in them. I went into the shadow of the awning to get out of the heat of the sun and to remove myself from Tom, that we might not be seen together constantly. Some of the ringleaders, as I must term the fellows whom the convicts undoubtedly regarded as heads or chiefs under Tom or Abram, joined my sweetheart and the prize-fighter, and the air speedily hummed with the eager, animated talk of the crowd. Will joined me, and we watched the long-boat. She had gone about a mile, and they had hoisted the sail for the shelter of its shadow. It hung like a sheet of silver from its yard, without a stir, so smooth was the sea, so still the air. The soldiers con-

tinued to sweep the boat along; the oars glanced like hairs of silver as they rose and fell.

Will went to the binnacle to judge of the course the boat was making. The scoundrel seaman who grasped the wheel growled out with a low, coarse laugh and in a cursing voice some remark I did not catch.

‘You wouldn’t have said that yesterday,’ exclaimed Will, and came back to me without taking further notice of the miscreant. ‘They are heading due west,’ said he. ‘I don’t suppose they will make up their minds till the other boats join them.’

‘What is the nearest land?’

‘The Brazilian coast. But the nearest is a long way off. There’s but a small chance for them outside of being picked up. And yet what a lump of a boat she is compared with the gig! When is she to be provisioned? And when are we to get away? And when we’ve got away, what’s going to happen? Good angels, I wish we were both at Stepney!’

‘Leave everything to Tom,’ said I, ‘and do as he tells you.’

He looked at me with a mutinous eye, went to the rail and stared over the side. Tom and the council of convicts had left the poop. I peered through the skylight; the cuddy was empty, the table covered with fragments and remains of food with broken china and broken bottles and glasses, and the deck scarcely fit to walk on for the wounding stuff that strewed it. I went to the break of the poop to see what they were about on the main-deck. Both quarter-boats were alongside and a gang of convicts were stowing them. The decks were filled with the people, who, since the departure of the long-boat, had grown orderly. The mass of them conversed in knots; groups hung about the galleys. They had discovered pipes and tobacco—tobacco there would be in plenty for the guard and the crew, and possibly a stock of pipes. A number of the convicts had pipes in their mouths, and their profound enjoyment of the tobacco, after months and, perhaps, years of penitential abstinence, undoubtedly helped to keep them quiet.

The sun stood something to the left of north, and the tall, motionless spaces of canvas on high cast shadows over the decks, and betwixt the rails the high noon was endurable. A thick, sickly smell of roasted paint rose from the ship's side. If you put your hand upon the exposed wood or any piece of metal, you were burnt as though you touched hot iron. I thought to myself: If these unhappy wretches should run short of water! If this calm should hold them motionless here for days and perhaps for weeks! For calms often serve ships so in these parts, as I had heard my father and his sea friends tell. I sought to compute the number on board, and, allowing for those who were presently to leave the ship, I calculated we should muster hard upon two hundred and fifty souls. When Tom left them, what would the miserable creatures do? But, then, what was that to me? All I cared for was that Tom should come off with his life and be a free man, no longer a degraded criminal, clanking in irons, to be mangled by the cat, perhaps, at the will of any ferocious Tas-

manian ruffian who might take a dislike to him. The convicts had seized the ship. One had but to look toward the now distant long-boat to appreciate the felons' estimate of human life. I could not pity them when I thought of how they would have kept the women and children and of the havoc they had wrought below, and when I looked at their faces, recalled their songs and oaths in drink, their bestial speech, and saw the plunder on their vile backs.

Tom and Abram and a little crowd of men stood near the gangway. My sweetheart looked on. He gave no orders. Poor Mr. Bates did all the work of superintendence, and watched the convicts as they slung the provisions and water for the seamen into the quarter-boats. When this work was ended, some cries were raised ; the throngs of people gathered about the main-hatch and filled the quarter-deck ; the armed malefactors formed a lane as before, but this time the fiddler did not make his appearance.

A hoarse voice at the main-hatch summoned the fellows below to come up, and one

after another the crew arrived. The huge one-eared boatswain, with his staring, glassy eyes, scowled round him with daring, defiant looks. Abram stood in the gangway and he halted every man ere passing him over the side to say : ' You cad stop with us if you like. We're short of worki'g 'a'ds and we'll treat you as one of us. What'll you do ? '

Mr. Balls made no answer ; he passed sullenly on ; so did the sailmaker and carpenter. Mr. Stiles, with a bewildered look at the convicts and then through the gangway at the white gleam of sea visible there, wiped his face on the sleeve of his convict jacket and said : ' Where might you be bound to, sir ? '

Some one cried out : ' That bloke was the ship's steward. He's of no use. '

' Over you go,' said Abram, giving Mr. Stiles a dab with his immense hand between his shoulder-blades, and the steward went with a run to the gangway and disappeared down the ladder.

Two of the sailors agreed to remain. Will, who had come to my side, told me that they

were the poorest, most skulking and worthless of the forecastle hands. The convicts, however, cheered when these fellows said they would stay, and the armed men opened to let them pass into the crowd. Will's fellow-apprentices looked up at him as they went to the boat, and one made a face as though to express his disgust at what he took to be my cousin's disloyalty or cowardice. I marked the effect of this upon Will, and grasped him by the arm, whispering passionately: 'Not a word!' and knew by the working of his face that I was just in time to arrest some angry protesting sentence that might have endangered him and me too.

Whilst the seamen filed through the gangway, I chanced to look down upon a crowd of convicts on the quarter-deck, and spied a fellow pick another man's pocket. He did it with admirable nimbleness and dexterity. Both men, the thief and the victim, were dressed in Lieutenant Chimmo's clothes. The man that was robbed was the rogue who had held up Captain Sutherland's gold watch and chain as though he meant to

play at bob-cherry, and it was this watch and chain which the other sneaked with inimitable adroitness.

I supposed no one but myself saw this ; many stood about, close, too, and the fellow stole the watch with the most foolish, staring, innocent face you could imagine, looking at the seamen going through the gangway as though he could think of nothing else. But scarcely had he snugged the watch and chain in his side-pocket, when another convict next him whipped it out with incredible skill and swiftness. Indeed, I should not have remarked the motions of the rogue's hand but for the gleam of the gold. A minute later, the first convict put his hand to his pocket and missed the watch. He turned furiously upon the second convict, shouting : ' A thief ! A thief ! ' for all the world as though he had been some respectable man in the streets just robbed. The felon who had the watch roared out : ' A thief ! A thief ! ' and fell upon the second convict whose pocket he had picked. A scuffle followed. The second convict, whose guilt appeared to be assumed by all who

stood near, as though they knew him as a thief without morals and capable of robbing a brother-thief, was kicked and beaten, and a mob of shouting convicts, with this rascal in the midst of them, surged forward, and I took notice that the rogue who shouted the loudest and kicked the hardest was the fellow who had the watch.

This commotion caused no uneasiness amongst the crowd who stood on the side of the deck where the open gangway was. No doubt they understood what had happened, and guessed that enough were concerned in the scuffle to insure justice being done.

By this time both quarter-boats were filled with the seamen. I dare say there were eleven or twelve men in each, and more could not have gone without peril, for they were small boats, though they were stout and fairly new. Bates had seen that each craft had its proper equipment of mast, sail, oars, rudder, and the like. One of the ringleaders, a sallow-faced convict with a hare-lip and but two or three fangs in his upper jaw, roared down to the

seamen to shove off, and in a few minutes both boats were heading in the direction of the long-boat, which had come to a stand awaiting them. Many convicts sprang upon the bulwarks and howled out insults in the wickedest language of the slums, in the most revolting speech of the great city rookeries and haunts of sin and infamy. The seamen rowed away in silence.

Tom came on to the poop and looked at me a little while with a face of grief and horror, as though his very soul shrank up within him, to think that I should be a spectator of such scenes and a hearer of such language. I read his mind; he would not approach me to speak.

Barney Abram followed, and with him were the hare-lipped man and some score of convicts, of whom half might have been principals in the seizure of the ship.

‘Let’s get to busidess,’ said Abram. ‘Talk to the people as was arradged, Butler.’

On this, Tom, laying hold of the brass-rail, leaned forward and cried out that every man was to come together on the quarter-

deck, as he had a few words to say to them. Mr. Bates stole up the ladder to my side and, without speaking, gazed with a look of bitter distress at the receding boats. Still was the ocean as polished a plain as ever it had been during the morning. The sun flashed up the water into blinding dazzle in the north-west, and the heat was terrible. There was no motion in the ship to fan the lightest of the topmost cloths; the atmosphere floated like the breath of an oven, without refreshment of the draughts which circle about a deck when the becalmed craft leans with the swell and her courses and topsails swing. The convicts massed themselves upon the main-deck; their faces were white or scarlet with the heat. The drink had been distilled out of them by the roasting temperature, and the unhappy beings stood looking up at Tom with as orderly a bearing as ever they exhibited when the doctor addressed them.

‘Men,’ said my sweetheart, ‘I’ve taken charge of this vessel. It’s the interests of everybody aboard her that I’ve now to consider; it’s for us, all assembled as we are,

to consider what's to be done. And first understand this: No ship can be sailed without discipline. Look aloft, men, at those vast heights. You see for yourselves what a complicated thing a ship is. If I and the mate of your own election,' and here he pointed to Mr. Bates, 'give an order, it must be promptly obeyed. If not—but you're not fools—you can guess what must follow if we're not obeyed. I'll not interfere in any arrangements which don't affect the safety of the ship. You'll sleep where you choose, and eat when you choose, and whatever you do that doesn't concern our lives will be no business of mine. But remember, there are nearly two hundred and fifty of us!'

He was interrupted by some voice shouting out the exact number.

'You taste this weather, don't ye? You can guess how it would fare with us to run short of water, and next to that would be the running short of provisions. You must be willing to go on allowance.'

'Willing? Of course. That's to be expected,' broke in three or four of them.

‘Those amongst you who have been seafaring men will unite with the sailors and form a crew and take the forecastle for your quarters, which must be your own, never to be intruded upon. Is that understood?’

‘Understood!’ was the answer, in a roar.

‘The rest will form themselves into three watches under heads, as in the doctor’s time; and every watch will come on deck turn and turn about, and stand by to assist the crew by pulling and hauling, cleaning and making the ship sweet, and so helping to keep you all alive, ready for the run ashore when the hour comes.’

A great cheer echoed this sentence.

‘Mr. Bates,’ continued Tom, ‘knows where everything is stowed in this ship. He’ll sample your food for you and name you your water allowance. Use him kindly, men. He’s of first-rate consequence to us.’

When this was said, Barney Abram crossed to the mate, brought him to the middle of the break of the poop, near to where Tom stood, and there, in the sight of all the convicts,

shook him by the hand. This was done in silence, but it was a very expressive performance—some might hold after the Eastern manner, seeing who was the main actor.

Tom went on: ‘I must have the captain’s cabin; the navigating instruments of the vessel are there and certain conveniences of furniture. The chief mate will also need his cabin; he’ll share it with that young gentleman,’ said he, pointing to Will. ‘If any of you in the hurry of this morning has mistaken Mr. Bates’s effects for Captain Barrett’s or the other officers’ or the commander’s, I’ll beg him to return them. He is our friend, and Mr. Abram wishes him to be well used. It is not right he should be thus dressed.’

‘Look at yourself?’ cried a voice on the quarter-deck.

‘Yes, but I’m a convict!’ exclaimed Tom, savagely.

This raised a roar; a hundred men seemed to speak at once; they yelled out to this effect—that there were no longer any convicts aboard that ship, that they were all free men,

that they had got their liberty and meant to keep it, and so forth.

‘Order!’ bawled Abram, raising his arms above his head. ‘We’re here to discuss matters quietly. The capt’id’s talked very sensibly, and I’ve with him up to the hilt as far as he’s good. Are those your sediments?’ said he, looking round at the little crowd of convicts who stood near.

‘There must be discipline,’ answered one of them, ‘and Butler’s talked very good sense so far.’

‘How about the stock of spirits?’ exclaimed a tall, thin, pale, grey-haired convict, dressed in an officer’s shell-jacket too short for him—so that when I think of him now it is always somehow in connection with Mr. Dickens’s incomparable figure of Smike. ‘Sensible men are wanted to see to that.’

‘You’re right, Williams,’ said Tom, giving him an emphatic nod.

‘Every cask of spirits,’ continued the man, speaking somewhat nasally and amidst a silence that might have rendered his voice audible as far as the fore-castle, ‘is full of

little devils swimming about. And every little devil, when he's swallowed, carries seven other little devils, all a-clinging to one another's tails, down into a man's inside. Call it eight devils,' said he, raising his voice. 'One for each eye, is two; one for each ear, is four; one for the tongue's, five; and there's three over to keep the others goin' it. 'Sponsible men, Abram, if that there sea is not to shut up this pleasing dream of liberty.'

'Men,' said Tom, 'there's sound reason in what you've heard. But I spy good sense breaking out amongst you all. Don't let your feelings carry you away. Look at the mess in the cuddy! What good has your drunken, breaking scramble done? The sober and sound amongst you should compel the men who smashed up that pleasant interior to clear it out, and to make it a shipshape abode for those whose quarters it's to become.'

Some one shouted: 'We'll have that done!'

'Dow talk to us about where we're to go,' said Abram.

‘Talk to me, and I’ll advise you,’ said Tom, with his eyes upon the crowd beneath, folding his arms and standing erect.

‘You’re a navigator and know the world,’ exclaimed the sallow, ill-looking man with the hare-lip.

‘Aye, and I’ll counsel you when you’ve spoken and want advice,’ said Tom.

‘Where are we now?’ exclaimed a convict on the quarter-deck.

‘Shall I give it to you in parallels and meridians?’ answered Tom, with a sort of angry scorn in his voice. ‘You wouldn’t understand me. Suppose Mr. Bates brings you up a chart, there’s no room for hard upon two hundred and fifty heads to overhang it at once; and how many of you can read, that it should be passed around? Now listen: We’re in the middle of the ocean to the north of the Equator. Yonder,’ said he, pointing over the port beam, ‘many hundred leagues distant, is the Gulf of Guinea and the great bight of the African coast from Cape Formosa to Cape Frio.’

The convicts turned their heads all one

way, staring like one man, some of them getting on their toes to look.

‘Yonder,’ continued Tom, pointing over the starboard beam, whereupon the heads of the convicts went round as before and all the poor, ignorant wretches stared as though by looking they’d see the land, ‘is the great Brazilian seaboard from Cape St. Roque to Rio Janeiro.’

I observed that Abram gazed at Tom with an indescribable smirking grin of admiration, as though struck by his familiar acquaintance with land entirely out of sight.

‘But my words,’ continued my sweetheart, ‘give only a few who are educated amongst you any ideas. Yet I can tell you no more than this: That we are in the heart of the great Atlantic Ocean, and that a huge world for choice is spread on either hand, away in the Pacific by rounding Cape Horn and away in the Indian and Southern Oceans by rounding the Cape of Good Hope. Where shall I carry you to?’

A number of the convicts spoke at once.

‘Wud at a tibe! Wud at a tibe!’ yelled Abram.

‘Let’s go home!’ shouted a man on the quarter-deck.

‘Debate it,’ said Abram.

An uneasy stir ran through the mass of the convicts, and a long, deep growl of dissent.

‘Home!’ cried Tom, passionately. ‘How’s home called in English? What’s its name? Is it Newgate or Millbank or her Majesty’s ship *Warrior*? Is it the Dockyard and the Arsenal and irons and handcuffs, cursing warders and carbines ready for your brains? You want my advice; I’ll counsel you.’

Some angry laughter broke from the men.

‘Who’s the madman that talks of home?’ shouted Tom. ‘Shall I sail you up the Thames and moor ye alongside the hulk? Is Plymouth your port, or do you choose Portsmouth?’

‘Why not try for the islands about Torres Straits?’ exclaimed one of the convicts who had been a seaman. Several bawled to know where Torres Straits were.

‘To the nor’ard of Australia,’ replied the convict. ‘There the sea’s thick with islands. Plenty to eat and drink, mates, and casting away a ship is as easy and safe as drawing a cork.’

‘Ain’t Norfolk Island hard by?’ exclaimed another.

‘My idea,’ said a ringleader, raising his voice as he overhung the poop-rail, ‘is to beach the vessel on the West Coast of Africa. There we breaks up into parties and disperses, and every party has their yarn ready manufactured to account for theirselves ag’in’ being met with or falling in with a settlement.’

‘Were you ever ashore on that coast?’ exclaimed Tom.

‘No,’ answered the man.

‘Then put this picture before you, one and all, for I who address you know what I am saying: Not a patch of verdure; leagues of sand like glass, glaring and shining; a few half-starved jackals; a few bushmen, who live on beetles and putrefied seals and go clothed in stinking sheepskins; a hare or

two at long intervals, and a few sand-plants ; the sun at noon like a lantern looming in vapours ; here and there penguins braying ; here and there sea-fowls shrieking, and the surf roaring always. Is that good enough for you ? You'd be clean-picked bones in a week.'

All this while the ocean remained breathless. Far away were the two black specks of quarter-boats, and beyond was the gleam of the long-boat's sail, a point of light under the horizon like the image of a star. Fortunately for the convicts, the lay of the yards flung the shadow of the canvas upon the deck. Otherwise it was broiling where the sun was. The poop was sheltered by the awning that stretched from the mizzen-mast to the brass rail. Many of the people stood with their coats over their arms and their shirts open. A mist rose from them. I figured how it had been at night in their quarters when I saw that mist and the motionless wind-sails and the main-hatch half sealed with its cage-like barricade.

'May I speak ?' cried a man on the quarter-deck, lifting up his hand.

‘To the poi’t,’ answered Abram. ‘Every bad with ad idea bay speak; but to the poi’t.’

‘Here’s a big ship,’ said the man, in a very fair cultivated accent (he was about six-and-twenty years of age, had held a situation as a clerk and had been sentenced for forgery), ‘and we’re a numerous and powerful company of determined men, needing nothing but the organisation that Captain Butler’s capable of. I propose that we chase small vessels and capture them, send their crews adrift like those yonder, man each captured craft with a number of ourselves, every lot containing a proportion of those who are sailors or who have followed the sea. This would disperse us. Every crew would do as they thought proper with their own craft. I should be for wrecking mine on some safe coast near a town where we could represent ourselves as castaways.’

The convicts listened with close attention. Abram looked at Tom, who made no sign.

‘What d’ye say to it, Butler?’ shouted a fellow.

‘Do what you please,’ answered my sweetheart.

‘Advise us,’ said the hare-lipped man.

‘It’s a landlubber’s fancy,’ said Tom.

A number of men talked at once. One of the original crew of the *Childe Harold* roared out: ‘It’s smothering rot! The capt’n’s laughing at you! Chase! In a craft arter this pattern, with twelve or fourteen hands and a working crew, ne’er a great gun nor a soul saving the capt’n and the mate as ’ud be capable of navigating them small craft after they was boarded and taken!’ He spat hard and turned his back in contempt.

‘My notion’s been this all through the blushen piece,’ said a beetle-browed, flat-nosed, ruffianly looking convict. ‘Sail to an oninhabited hisland and settle him. A hisland where there’s grub agoing in fruit-trees and beastesses of fish what crawls upon the beach, all which there’ll be some here as has heard of. Where water trickles sweet an’ cold, and the weather it ain’t too hot. There, upon that hisland, we can concoct

and consart, and them what pleases can be took off by passing vessels. The others will be a-doing as did them mutineers of the *Bounty* whose capt'n he was named Bligh. We moors this ship and keeps her handy. Females ain't ever fur to look for. In this 'ere ship wives can be brought from places which ain't too fur off and where the colour won't be wrong, the 'igh seas being vide of choice. That's bin my notion all through the fired piece.'

'Who's next?' shouted Abram, impatiently.

One of the remaining crew of the ship—a sailor with a cast eye and a head of hair so exactly resembling oakum that no convict could look at it without finding something personal and a sort of reflection in it—this man, who sat high-perched above the heads of the throng on the quarter-deck winch, snapped his fingers at the poop and asked leave to address the gents.

'What d'ye want to say?' shouted the hare-lipped man, who, I gathered, ranked next to Abram as the principal ringleader.

‘Gents, all,’ cried the fellow, ‘man an’ boy, I’ve followed the seas for two and twenty years, and in that time I’ve sailed all about the world and there’s scarce a furrin part as I haven’t visited. Now, if I was you, speaking with Captain Butler’s good leave, what I’d do’s this: Round the Horn t’other side of South Amerikay there lies what’s called the North Pacific Ocean. From the Sandwich Islands, right away to this side the Philippines, including of the Ladrones and the Caroline Islands, it’s all chock-a-block with the sort of little countries ye oughter visit. A lovely cordial drink they manufactures out of cocoanut juice. There’s no call for clothes. The natives are friendly disposed. Them as ain’t are easily knocked over the head. White men like yourselves live in them islands. If I was you gents, I’d get Captain Butler to steer the ship into the North Pacific, touch and discharge a score of ye, touch and discharge another score, touch and touch again till this here multitude was broke up. That’s my notion, gents, and

your chance, and I'll ask Captain Butler what he thinks,'

'It'll do!' exclaimed Tom. 'I would propose nothing better.'

On this there was some confusion, owing to a number of the convicts cheering, whilst others shouted questions to the poop. The silence upon the sea, and the ship lying as stirless as though she were at anchor, made this strange council of convicts somewhat ironical to my mind. It was hard to cast one's eye over the lake-like ocean and realise the North Pacific as a part of the world that was to be come at by the vessel. Tom's approval of the seaman's scheme seemed to settle the matter. Many questions, most of them ignorant and ridiculous, were bawled. They were answered from the poop, sometimes by Tom, sometimes by Abram and the ringleaders, and sometimes they were answered by fellows on the quarter-deck.

After a little, and whilst the decks were a-buzz with the vast noise of talk, the prize-fighter asked Mr. Bates to produce a chart of

the islands named by the seaman. Mr. Bates fetched a chart. It was a big sheet with a blue back, comprised a portion only of the North Pacific, and was very clearly drawn and printed. This chart was laid upon the skylight and the corners weighted. The principal convicts drew in a body to it.

I stood near and overheard the talk. They called up the sailor, and he pointed to three or four of the islands which he said he had visited. The hare-lipped man asked him if British ships of war cruised in those seas. He answered that here and there a small surveying-vessel might be fallen in with, 'but nothen to take notice of,' said he, 'nothen that's going to hurt ye. It's your best chance, gents. Many sorts of vessels are a-touching at them islands for water, nuts, and sometimes for their entertainment, and often again for their convenience. The sailors run, 'specially from the South Seamen. You'll have your yarns ready in case of questions; but down in them parts curiosity ain't what you might call active. Stick to this here scheme, and there's nothen to hinder any

man as has a mind to return home from finding himself arter a year or two in Lunnon again, with dollars enough in his pocket to keep him in wittles till something turns up.'

'All that this man says is very true,' exclaimed Tom. 'He's given us a good scheme. We're obliged to him.'

Saying this, he edged out of the crowd about the skylight and, seeing me abreast of the rail, came and stood beside me.

'Is it a good scheme?' I whispered, without looking at him.

'It will amuse them,' he answered softly. 'I must seem in earnest. What do I care?'

'You control them wonderfully.'

'Poor wretches!' he muttered, and, stepping to the companion-way, took the ship's telescope out of its brackets and pointed it at the three boats upon the sea. Their situation was now determinable to the naked eye by the dim, tiny gleam of the long-boat's sail.

'They're sneaking westward,' said Tom, talking low with his eye at the glass. 'The American seaboard may give me the chance

I want. Eastward nearly everything afloat is British—curse the name !’

By this time, the convicts on the quarter-deck had got wind of the chart on the poop and were crowding up the ladders to look. That all might obtain a sight, Abram bawled a recommendation to them to form themselves into small divisions. This was done. The chiefs or ringleaders broke up the mass into little gangs, and one after another these gangs came to the skylight and overhung the chart. The cast-eyed sailor with the hair of oakum stood by to answer questions and pointed out the islands. Some of the educated convicts dwelt upon the chart so long, musing, running their fingers down the meridians, calculating distances and so forth, that the waiting gangs howled at them with impatience. Yet all was now orderly as one could wish—far more orderly than I had dared expect.

As the gangs passed on from the skylight aft, viewing the chart and questioning the cast-eyed man, they broke up and hung about various parts of the poop or returned to the main-deck. The coarse joke, the loud,

brutal laugh was frequent ; but there was no horse-play, none of the former huge, hideous, cart-horse gambolling, shouting, and tipsy fighting. The heat lay upon the people like a weight. Their spirits were sobered by the extraordinary oppression of the vast, silent, roasting calm.

‘Abram,’ called Tom, holding the telescope and still standing at my side, ‘let some of the men—those responsible for the mess—clean the cuddy out. Look through the skylight. The deck’s full of broken glass. And my advice to you and the others is to arrange without delay for the distribution of the people for the night. You’ll want cooks. Those who have been cooking so far should continue. They know what’s needed, where to seek, how to manage. Mr. Bates here will counsel you on quantities. I wish to see the ship cleared fore and aft, and everything ready for any sort of weather that may come along. Ay, and there’s more yet. Suppose an English man-of-war heaves in sight and signals us, we must know what to do and be in readiness to do it. The pennant’s an old

cure for dull sight. A devilish keen eye that never winks lies spliced in the fly of every man-of-war's whip. And d'ye see that, Abram?' he cried, pointing at the sea over the starboard quarter.

Twenty or thirty convicts were upon the poop, and they all turned their heads and stared in a hurrying, eager way in the direction indicated by Tom's levelled forefinger.

'See what?' exclaimed the prize-fighter, lifting the sharp of his massive hand to his brow, and straining his black, fiery vision.

'That dark blue line.'

Tom stepped to the rail and cried out: 'Stand by, all you seamen aboard this vessel, to trim sail!' Then turning to Abram: 'Tumble the people to their work of cleaning up, will ye?' he cried. 'Put the cooks to their duty; we can't starve!' He then turned to me and, placing the telescope in my hand, said loudly: 'Marlowe, replace this, then go to your berth and carry what belongs to you to my cabin, and wait for me there.'

CHAPTER XXXVI

SHE SUPS WITH HER SWEETHEART

I WENT quickly, that the people might see how smartly I obeyed the new captain. A few convicts roamed about the cuddy, staring as though out of curiosity into the plundered berths and at the decorations and lamps, and needlessly crushing the broken glass into the carpet as they walked. I stepped warily and got to my berth, unlocked the door, and found all right within. I could not help reflecting upon what had passed since I was last here; it seemed a week since I was in this berth, so violent, hurried, and numerous had been the incidents of that day.

I made one bundle of my woman's attire, the other clothes and a few toilet things, and went to the captain's cabin. Then, thought I, I shall want a mattress to lie on, so I fetched the convict's mattress, pillow and blanket, and

shut the door and sat down to wait for Tom, no one during these journeys having taken the least notice of me.

It was horribly hot, and I opened the large circular port and leaned with my head in the orifice. I now heard a noise of the rippling of water, and saw the sea of a deep shade of blue to about a mile away, where it then gleamed white and polished, the calm being still unbrushed there. The ship had caught a little air of wind ; ropes were flung down overhead, the soft patter of naked, the sharp beat of shod feet actively running about sounded through the planks ; the silence upon the water was now broken by the voices of men singing out as they hauled, and presently at a pistol-shot distance I saw what might have been a piece of green timber feathered with weed slowly slide past.

I looked around me, and my heart was full of pity when I thought of Captain Sutherland. I pitied him, I say, and I grieved for the women and the little children, but the soldiers and the others did not appeal to me. I took no interest in the fate of the doctor

and Captain Barrett, and I never could forget that one of the soldiers had shot the poor madman, and that all would have slaughtered every convict at the word of command with less compunction than the convicts themselves had sent them adrift.

The captain's cabin was wrecked ; he had slept in a handsome mahogany bunk, and its mattress was ripped open as though the beasts who did it hoped to find money or some sort of booty hidden in the hair. Two little miniatures had been left to hang upon the bulkhead ; one was the captain, the other a lady, doubtless his wife, a rather pretty, grave-looking woman. I thought of how Tom and I had sat for our miniatures, and wondered if the captain's wife were alive, whether she would ever see her husband again. Should I ever have seen Tom again but for my resolution to hide in the ship that was to transport him ? This reflection made me mad.

Whilst I sat or walked about, lost in inflaming thoughts, I heard a great noise in the cuddy and, peeping out, spied some fifteen or twenty convicts hard at work brushing and.

tidying up the interior. Abram just then came in with a little company of the ring-leaders ; I may tell you that there were perhaps twelve to fifteen heads in this uprisal, not counting Tom, whom I never would name as having had a share in it.

On hearing Abram speak, I held the door open by about an inch. The prize-fighter and his crew stood close against my cabin, talking and looking on at the convicts at work. They were arranging for their own accommodation.

‘Butler takes the captid’s cabid, that’s fair,’ said Abram. ‘His y’u’g fre’d shares it. That’s Butler’s business. Bates a’d adother wud’s provided for yodder. You a’d be,’ he continued, addressing one of the convicts, ‘will take the cabid dext to the captid’s. Right aft don’t soot be ; the botion there bakes be ill. The rest of you will fide pledty of roob. I recobbe’d that the better order abogst us tosses or draws for the accommodatiod dowd-stairs. We dote wadt to be suffocated by dumbers in this part of the ship ; the old quarters will be thid (thinned) by those who cub aft ; with the hatch oped, the

widsails dowl and the barricade id shivers, they'll be airy edough ; ad thed there's the soldiers' quarters.'

A few minutes later Tom came in. He shut the door and took me by the hand and kissed me ; sat down, and made me sit beside him, still holding my hand, whilst he gazed at me with the full affection of his dear, noble heart. He was pale with the heat. His eyelids dropped with the weariness that was upon him. He was clad, as throughout the day, in his convict shirt and trousers.

'There is a little breeze, and we are under way again,' said he. 'I wish it may hold. There is no telling what ship may fall in with the boats, and the quicker I can push the vessel out of these parts the better, though I must keep the tropic latitudes aboard to get away in,' said he, softening his voice. 'We shall need smooth water and fine weather, dear one, and God's care. It may be done to-night. It may be done to-morrow night. All must be in readiness.'

I told him what I had just overheard.

'Let them do what they like,' said he.

‘This cabin’s ours, and by that I mean that it’s yours. I can rest anywhere whilst you sleep, and can take a nap here, if you like, when you are out of it.’

I was about to speak. He smiled, and silenced me with his hand.

‘Don’t you remember the lectures I used to give you? Let all things be as I wish. Will and poor Bates will be safely lodged. It cannot be for long. A night or two. Nay, a week, if you will. But long it must not be,’ he added, with a note of passion. ‘Could I keep you in this ship? What have you already heard and seen? Oh, it is not fit! It is not fit! Such scum as they are! Such foul-mouthed hogs! When I think of what I used to suffer at night in the hulk—forced to listen, lying sleepless, though nearly dead with the awful toil of the day!’

Our talk then softly and swiftly ran on many matters which I shall not tease you with, such as what we should do if we came off with our lives in the gig; the surest and yet most convenient places in the world for Englishmen to hide themselves in; my plans

as to the disposal of my house in London ; the drawing of my money secretly, so that the law should not be able to get at him by finding out where I was. These things and the like we talked of whilst we sat hand in hand, and sometimes he would break off to kiss me and thank me for my love and loyalty and to admire me.

I asked him how the gig was to be secretly provisioned and got ready for lowering.

‘I have arranged for that,’ said he. ‘I told Abram awhile ago on the poop, and some dozens besides heard me, that it was my practice at sea to keep my boats provisioned and watered. I then rattled about our having but three boats, talked of the big number of souls aboard, and said that in a day or two, when things had settled down a bit, I’d hunt out the carpenters and handy workmen amongst the people and put them to making a number of rafts after a design of my own, so that in case of foundering no man need lose his life for the want of something to float on. This sort of talk pleased them mightily. Convicts set a high value on their lives. The

bigger the rogue the bigger the price. And of all the people in this ship Barney Abram is the man who'd be the least willing to die, be his spirit what it will when he enters a ring. So then and there I told Mr. Bates that the boats were to be provisioned and watered the first thing to-morrow morning, and I turned to Will, who stood by, and significantly ordered him to take the gig under his own care and see to her.'

'That was clever,' said I, clapping his hand with mine.

'The difficulty I foresee,' he went on, 'is the helmsman. Yet it is to be managed. I wish there was no moon this week ; but, fair or foul, I must have you out of this ship of devils.'

He then looked about him at the nautical instruments, the charts and books, peeped here and there, and took a sorrowful survey of the plundered berth. He put my convict mattress and pillow into the bunk and said that would be my bed by night—for the night or two we were to remain on board—that he would lock me up out of harm's way and

release me in the morning. I dared not expostulate ; he was my master if he was not yet my lord ; his least command, nay, his lightest wish, moved me as a powerful impulse. Where would my dear one himself sleep ? Yet I was afraid to ask.

‘Now,’ said he, ‘I want you to keep clear of the convicts. Get away out of hearing of them. Lodge yourself here closely ; you’ll not be missed. I’ll lock you in, and no one will dare trouble you. I’ll tell them you’re helping me in the navigation of the ship and acting as a sort of captain’s clerk. It’ll be but for a day or two. Meanwhile we must eat and drink. Come forward and see what’s doing in the galley.’

We were leaving the cabin, when he stopped to exclaim : ‘Do you know what a slop-chest is ?’

‘Yes.’

‘Is there one in the ship ?’

‘I’ve heard Will speak of a slop-chest.’

He nodded, and we then left the berth. They had trimmed up the cuddy, but the starred and splintered mirrors made a ruin of

it. Abram was gone; a number of convicts lounged about the interior. Some seemed to be preparing the cabins; others were seated with their legs hoisted on to the table, others sprawled along the cushioned lockers. Most of them were smoking. A continuous hoarse, sulky growl of conversation, frequently broken by a short, deep laugh, rolled through the cuddy.

Tom called out: 'Do any of you know if they're preparing a meal for the people?'

'Ay,' answered one of the men, 'the cooks are at work. Some beef's been taken out of the cask, and the officer called Bates has sarved out tea and sugar—the reg'lar muck-mess, pal.'

'Where are we to eat?' exclaimed a heavy-faced, coarse-voiced man, who sat smoking in a lounge-chair near the mizzen-mast.

'The chief'll settle that,' answered Tom. 'There's the whole of the ship for a dinner-table.'

We walked to the galley. The destruction of the barricades had vastly improved the look of the vessel. The decks ran in a clear sweep.

Some of the men had scrubbed at the stain where the quarter-deck sentry fell, but the dye was still red in the plank. The mass of the convicts aimlessly hung about in groups. Numbers overhung the rail, staring out to sea and talking. Others crouched in clusters under the bulwarks; some had half stripped themselves. Many were on the poop, where I caught sight of Mr. Bates walking with Will.

I called Tom's attention to the general air of listlessness. He answered: 'It's partly heat, partly reaction. They've woke up to the sense of what's happened, and the loneliness of the sea is upon them, though they couldn't give you a name for their sensations.'

This brought us to the ship's galley. The convicts had partly demolished their own kitchen, yet, of the two, it had been more serviceably furnished for so great a crowd as the ship contained.

The sun was now hanging low over the western ocean. I never before beheld it so vast and so red. Its wake came straight to the side of the ship from the edge of the sea.

I saw no cloud, yet a soft, gentle wind blew ; all the water was dark with it, and it tenderly swelled the ship's canvas. All plain sail was set, saving the main-royal, where the lightning had left no mast to hoist the yard on. These observations I made quickly whilst Tom put his head into the galley-door and talked to the people within.

The men who had cooked for the convicts under the doctor were the cooks now. There were three of them, dressed in clothes stolen out of the forecastle. Spite of their cropped crowns and a sort of actor's bullet-headed appearance, that might owe something to their blue, shorn cheeks and chins, they looked, in their seamen's attire, superior to most of the fellows who had slept before the mast. Tom questioned them. A large hook-pot of steaming tea was then handed to him. He gave it to me with a glance which I perfectly understood. They cut off a piece of beef and put it into a tin dish. With these things and two or three ship's biscuits, which one of the convicts took from a dresser-drawer two-thirds full of that sort of bread, we made our way

aft, I carrying the tea and the beef and walking after Tom, as though he used me as his servant.

One of a number of convicts at the break of the poop was Barney Abram. He called down to know what was that I had. Tom answered that it was his supper. 'I can't wait for you people,' said he. 'The mate must be relieved in a few minutes.' We then passed into his cabin.

We wanted sugar; a ridiculous, trifling matter I should not mention but for this, that, with Tom's leave, I went aft into that small starboard cabin which Mr. Stiles had made a larder of, and which before the convicts rose had always been richly stocked, hams and sides of bacon hanging from the upper deck, fine flour and white biscuits in casks, various sorts of tinned stuffs, with all such necessities, not to mention luxuries, which the cabin-table demanded—I say, when I entered this little room to seek for a parcel of sugar, I witnessed a crueller, more abominable scene of waste than could be invented: Flour-casks split and the deck covered with dust; broken bottles of pickles; ham and cheese, as though

they had been jumped upon. Indeed, I want memory to describe this horrid picture of wanton, senseless waste and destruction. Yet I found what I sought, and took also some cheese, what I broke from one that lay already broken upon the deck, filled a tin with white biscuit out of a gaping cask, and so returned to Tom.

We made a good meal. Neither of us had tasted food for many hours. I asked Tom after he should have gone on deck to send Will to me, as the lad, being afraid to seek for food on his own account, might be half famished for all I knew. Mr. Bates I reckoned old enough and man enough to look after himself. I then saw that there was oil in the bracket-lamp at the bulkhead. Indeed, the seeing to such things had been a part of my work under the steward. When Tom had ended his meal, he got up and said: 'I shall turn the key upon you and give it to Will, who'll let himself in; but see that he locks you up when he leaves you.'

'Shan't I see you again to-night, Tom?'

'Oh, yes. I'll look in—say at nine. You

can reckon your time by one of the chronometers. 'Tis Greenwich time, and our time will be about ——,' and he named it.

He kissed me, and held me by the hands and looked at me as though his overflowing heart sought in vain to vent itself; then cutting the air with his clenched fist as if maddened by a sudden memory, he stepped out, turned and withdrew the key.

I waited for Will, but he did not quickly come. By this time it was nearly dark; some while earlier, however, I had thoroughly searched the cabin for means of making fire, and almost at the minute of giving up found a tinder-box and flint and matches in a little white box on a shelf. This apparatus was so like mine that I might have supposed Mr. Balls had presented it to the captain.

I lighted the lamp and sat listening to the noises in the cuddy. There was a constant tumult of voices and a clatter of metal dishes; I guessed that a crowd of the convicts were eating at the table, and, not easily finding fresh crockery, were employing the prison utensils. More than an hour had passed since Tom left,

when the key was turned, and Will entered holding a pannikin of tea. When the door opened, the noise in the cuddy came in very strong and rudely; the wretches seemed to have gone off their heads again, and were bawling and singing as though something stronger than tea had filled their pannikins. They had managed to trim and light the cuddy lamps.

‘It’s time we were out of it,’ said Will, pulling off his coat and flinging down his cap with a shake of the head that drove the sweat drops in a little shower from his brow. ‘I’d rather take my chance on a bare plank than stick another week in this hell—and a hell it is, and a worse hell it is likely to become, though I hate strong words.’

‘Fall to your supper,’ said I, ‘and give me the news as you eat.’

He went to work and ate heartily. We had left plenty for him. Whilst he supped, he said that Abram had made Bates show him where the rum casks were kept. Bates told Tom of this, and Will, standing near, heard Tom ask Abram what the people intended to

do. “ ‘Why,’ says the prize-fighter, ‘they’re going to brew a few bowls to drink one another’s health in. They mean to make a night of it. Don’t they deserve a little pleasure? You’ll take the head of the table, Butler, and give us a song.’ ” “No,” says Tom, “I’m in charge of the ship——” “There’s Bates,” says Abram. “I’m in charge of the ship,” answered Tom savagely. “Don’t look to me to countenance this sort of thing. I should have hoped you and the other leaders valued your safety too highly to broach a rum-cask for the people.” A number of convicts,’ said Will, ‘who had drawn near, told Tom that if he interfered with their pleasures and liberty, they knew their remedy. Tom cursed them, and I thought would have spat at them,’ continued Will. ‘He grasped one of the strongest by the arm and, pointing to the boats, asked the man if he could count. The fellow fell back a step as though Butler had gone mad, and raised his arm to cover his face. “Count!” roared Tom. “One, two, three; good to hold about thirty men, leaving about two hundred

and twenty to be roasted alive if the ship takes fire! Thirty to be picked up and hanged for this job!" he cried, with a laugh that had a real note of madness in it: "and the rest to be left here to fry or leap overboard, shrieking like the rats that'll show them the road!" His manner, instead of further enraging, seemed to subdue the beasts. "There'll be no fire," said Abram; "why do't you keep your tepper?"

'What followed?' said I.

'Butler walked away. Some of the convicts abused him when his back was turned. Barney Abram stood up for him. He said that Butler meant well, and that his anxiety for the ship's safety proved his honesty. He was bad-tempered and a little mad; he was mad because he was being transported for what he had never done. Then, fearing I might be noticed as a listener, I slunk away, and Butler gave me the key, and told me to go to you and get some supper.'

He stayed until he had had time to make a good meal. We talked in murmurs, and nearly all our talk concerned our getting

away from the ship. He told me that Bates thought that Tom would have ventured it this night had the gig been provisioned. Bates, he said, was wild to get out of the ship. He feared for his life.

Will went on deck after sitting with me for half an hour. He locked me in as he had been bidden, and when he was gone I felt afraid, for I thought to myself: What shall I do, locked up below here, if the felons set the ship on fire?

CHAPTER XXXVII

SHE DESCRIBES A WILD, DRUNKEN, UPROARIOUS
SCENE

THE noise of many voices had been slowly growing in the cuddy. The swell and the volume of sound were assurance that the interior was full. I wondered the people did not drink and revel on the deck, where there was plenty of room and fresh air and dewy coolness. The cuddy, perhaps, was like being ashore, and put them in mind of their old haunts. There was no likeness, indeed, to a tavern in it, yet the convicts might find something to refresh their memory of the boozing-kens in the broken mirrors and the low pitch of the ceiling or upper deck and in the bulkheads, which would answer to their idea of walls, particularly should the atmosphere become dense with tobacco-smoke and sicken-

ing with the fumes of rum and clamorous as a houseful of shrieking madmen with the songs, jokes, laughter, and the many humours of the stews and kennels.

The *Childe Harold* was a very stoutly built ship. The cabin bulkheads were exceedingly thick and substantial. I could not hear individual voices plainly; the combined growl of the men's speech, often rising into a sort of roar like to the noise of a breaker sweeping back from a beach after it has burst into froth, overwhelmed the particular notes and accents which swelled it. Sometimes I thought I could hear Barney Abram shouting, then there'd happen a sinking in the tumult when I'd catch a loud, coarse laugh, solitary and startling, or the voice of a man beginning a song that was quickly drowned by the freshening of the hubbub.

There was a constant scraping and squeezing past my cabin bulkhead, as though of people coming and going or thrusting to make room, with a jarring grumble of talk but indistinct to me. This sort of thing may have gone on for about half an hour. I

looked at the chronometer, and calculated that it was about half-past eight. I longed for nine o'clock, when Tom had promised to come. The people were fast growing noisier. Frequent scuffles occurred just outside my door. The cuddy was densely packed, and the scuffling signified the struggle of some of the fellows to draw close to the table where the drink was.

It was short of nine by a quarter of an hour when the key was turned and Tom came in. This cabin-door was close to the cuddy quarter-deck entrance; yet the interior was so full that when Tom entered and came in with a sort of run, as though he had helped himself with his elbows, I saw the crowd, close-packed, pressed hard against Bates's cabin opposite, as they were against mine. 'Hold my arm,' said Tom. I seized him, and he took me through the door and shoved to right and left to make a passage through the cuddy entrance, that stood but five or six feet away. He then returned to lock the door.

I was now able to see and hear. The cuddy, as I had suspected, was packed full.

The sailors had joined the convicts, so that there were over two hundred and forty people in that roasting interior. The atmosphere was dark with tobacco smoke, through which the large cabin-lamps loomed like the red moon in a mist. I coughed violently even on the quarter-deck whilst I looked through the open door, waiting for Tom to come out. By standing on the coamings of the booby-hatch, I got a view over the heads of the crowd and saw the whole picture.

Abram sat at the head of the table in shirt and trousers only; his black, pitted, ugly face shone with sweat; they had put one chair on top of another for him, and he sat with his legs wide apart and his feet on the table; between his knees was a pail, out of which he was ladling drink into pannikins which endlessly travelled his way, or were extended at arm's length to him. He seemed half drunk, and occasionally withdrew the ladle full of the liquor to flourish it over his head, whilst he uttered a roar like a beast expressing joy and having no note but a roar;

at such times he swayed on his perch as though he must topple over.

As yet not many of the felons were intoxicated, but anyone could see how it must be with them presently. The younger amongst the people made the most noise. Again there was the aimless shouting of the morning, the roaring chaff, the yells one to another from distant points, the frequent breaking into songs, with local choruses, swaggeringly chanted by those near the singer. The heat was frightful ; I was amazed that the wretches could draw breath. At this foremost end of the table, high perched like the ruffian Abram, was the hare-lipped convict ; he, too, had a big pail of liquor betwixt his legs, the contents of which he served out with a pannikin. Nearly every man had a pipe, and again and again one or another of the convicts rose to get a light at the lamps. They stood on their chairs with a foot on the table and dodged drunkenly at the flame, with an open end of rope-yarn or a piece of wood, and whilst it burnt freely they lighted their pipes, blowing

out dense clouds, and then they'd pass the burning brands to men shouting for them.

This was shocking to see. Nothing in the behaviour of the malefactors was so fearfully menacing. All that I here describe I witnessed in the few moments whilst I waited for Tom to lock the door. He forced his way out, took me by the arm, and in silence we mounted the poop-ladder. Oh, the sweetness of the air up there and the peace and beauty of that gentle tropic night! The moon was up, the dark sky was crowded with stars to the horizon, the ship was sailing noiselessly before the wind. Aloft, where the sails swelled stirless as carvings of stone, glowing in the beams of the moon that shone athwart them, all was silent. Forward, not a figure stirred. Aft, Mr. Bates walked on one side of the deck, and by the clear, white light in the air I distinguished Will at the wheel. Tom spoke no word till we were on the poop. He then said: 'I believe we shall be able to get away to-night.'

'The sooner the better, Tom.'

'If they don't set fire to the ship,' said he,

‘we may be able to get away easily, and in a quarter-boat. I chose the gig because she hangs where she may be lowered without much risk of observation; but the people down there mean to drink themselves dead drunk. If that happens, we’ll take a quarter-boat.’

‘Is that Will at the wheel?’

‘Aye. The dog whose trick was up refused to stand any longer when he understood there was grog going in the cabin. No other man would come aft to relieve him. So much the better. It all works for us.’

We joined Mr. Bates and went to the helm and stood there. They were now making a horrible roaring noise in the cuddy. It sounded like a great, drunken cheering of a ‘sentiment,’ or speech.

‘I’ve been watching them light their pipes,’ said Mr. Bates. ‘We must stand by, Butler.’

‘Bates, it’s to be done!’ exclaimed Tom, looking round the sea. ‘What shall we want? Nothing that may not be got and stowed in twenty minutes. Johnstone, jump

forward and try one of the scuttle-butts. If there's water, fill a couple of boat's beakers.'

He took the wheel from the lad, who fled off the poop like the shadow of a cloud in a gale.

'Which is the better quarter-boat, Bates?'

'The aftermost.'

'See if it's all right with her.'

The mate sprang upon a hencoop and got into the boat, where his figure was lost. He came out after a few minutes and reported everything in its place. Will returned; he said that the starboard scuttle-butt was half-full, took the beaker out of the boat and went forward. When this was filled he took the beaker from the other boat, filled and stowed it in the boat we meant to use.

Just then a hush fell upon the people below. It startled one, so suddenly did it come on top of the noise. The skylights lay wide open; I stepped to one and looked down. Some of the convicts already lay with their heads buried in their arms upon the table, motionless in deep, drunken sleep. Others who were within the compass of my

gaze leaned back, staring in the stupefaction of drink with fixed eyes. A few lay like dead men upon the deck. But the great mass were still wide awake, full of the fever of drink and the life of their own hideous spirits; as many as I could see were all looking aft where Abram sat, and I had not been watching a minute when Abram, whose deep bass voice, considerably thickened and deepened yet by the drams he had drained, roared out the following song (I caught some of the words and long afterward met with the verses):

The prize-fighter sang it thus:

As clever Tob Pitch, while the rabble was bawli'g,
Rode stately through 'Olbord to die id his calli'g,
He stopped at the George for a bottle of sack,
A'd probised to pay for it whed he caba back.

Here broke in a roar of laughter.

His waistcoat a'd stockids a'd breeches were white,
His cap had a dew cherry ribbon to tie't.
The baidis to the doors a'd the balcodies rad,
A'd said: 'Lack-a-day, he's a proper yu'g bad.'

The singer was again interrupted by another great shout of laughter. It may have been his drunken grimaces and thick pronun-

ciation that amused the convicts; there seemed not much to laugh at in the words of his song.

But as at the windows the ladies he spied,
Like a beau id the box he bowed low od each side !
A'd whed the last speech the loud 'awkers did cry,
He swore frob his cart: ' It was all a dabbed lie !'
The ha'gbad for pardod fell dowd od his dee;
Tob gave hib a kick id the guts for his fee—

Here broke in another shout that lasted some moments. The convicts beat upon the table with their pannikins; several flaming matches were passed along and pipes sucked hard. The atmosphere rose through that open skylight hot as a blast from a furnace and dark with tobacco clouds. The prize-fighter, in a thicker and deeper voice, proceeded:

Tob said: ' I bust speak to the people a little;
But I'll see you all cussed here before I will whittle.
Take courage, dear cobrades, a'd be dot afraid,
Dor slip this occasiod to follow your trade;
By codscience is clear a'd by spirits are carb,
A'd thus I go off without prayer-book or psarb.'
Thed follow the practice of clever Tom Pitch,
Who hung like a 'ero ad dever would flitch !

On finishing this song, the prize-fighter bellowed in a loud voice of thunder: ' Chorus,

pals all! Chorus, pals all!’ And the drunken mob, in every variety of note, till the chorus was no more than an ear-splitting, discordant howling, repeated

Then follow the practice of clever Tom Pinch,
Who hung like a hero and never would flinch!

The convicts vastly enjoyed their own singing. They shrieked, cheered, whistled, hammered and roared, and roared again with laughter and applause. Whilst I looked I saw a man fall dead-drunk from his chair right under the skylight and lie like a log on the deck. (This was the lean, grey man who had talked of the devils that swam in a rum-cask.) I thought of that day when Mr. Barney Abram sat with other prisoners under the skylight and lifted up his voice in a song of devotion, and the doctor’s stern face of approval came before me.

Some men on the main-deck laughed loudly and talked uproariously. They were convicts going to the galley for hot water to mix fresh pails of rum with. The moonshine lay white on the planks, and you could see the buckets swaying in the fellows’ hands as

they lurched, laughing and talking, toward the galley, about whose open door hovered the sheen of a lamp burning within.

‘I hope they’ll not end at this,’ said Tom, standing at my side and speaking to Mr. Bates. ‘If they don’t get more drunk, they’ll fall to fighting, and bethink them of the soldiers’ weapons under the poop, and turn the cabin into a shambles.’

‘The drink takes effect quickly,’ said Mr. Bates.

‘Many of them haven’t tasted a drop for years!’ exclaimed Tom.

The people below fell silent again ; a loud, clear voice, that did not seem in liquor, began to sing. I guessed from the direction in which the convicts’ heads were turned that the singer was the hare-lipped man. We came away from the skylight and stood near the wheel, which Will held.

‘This wind is taking off,’ said Mr. Bates.

Tom looked aloft and then round the sea. He started, peered a little eagerly and, pointing, exclaimed : ‘Is that a vessel yonder in the flow of the moonlight?’

Will, who had keen eyes, looked and said: 'Yes, sir.'

The mate fetched the glass from the companion-way and gave it to Tom, who said: 'It's a little brig, I think.'

The mate pointed the telescope, and when he was done with it I asked leave to look. He steadied the glass, and I quite clearly saw the vessel. She lay exactly under the moon in the full stream of the silver light, where the first of it smote the dark edge and flowed across the ocean.

'How is she heading?' said Tom.

'She seems to be standing south,' answered the mate.

'Would she not receive us?' said I.

'We can't board anything in these clothes,' exclaimed Tom.

'She don't seem to be travelling,' exclaimed the mate. 'She hangs steady under the moon. Perhaps the calm's about her. The heat's drying up the breeze.'

'Suppose she should have the doctor, soldiers, and the rest of them on board,' said Will.

‘Butler,’ exclaimed Mr. Bates with energy, ‘I swear you have nothing to fear. You are innocent; you have saved life; you have witnesses——’

Tom stamped on the deck and turned his back with a gesture that was like saying he had settled that question in previous talks with the mate.

They were again howling out a chorus in the cuddy; the tobacco smoke rose like steam into the moonshine through both open skylights; shouts for drink and for pipe-lights were incessant. Tom, hearing a sound of scuffling coming from the main-deck, went to the rail and stood looking. He returned and said: ‘A dozen of them have staggered out for air, I suppose; the freshness has proved too strong, and every man dropped as though knocked on the head. There they lie, dead-drunk on the decks.’

‘That vessel sits without life,’ said the mate, looking at the sea under the moon. ‘I’ve been watching her. She’s either hove to or there’s something wrong.’

Our own languid motion had drawn the

little craft out of the brilliant reflection. She now hung on the margin of it, scarce distinguishable but for the faint light her sails made. I suppose she was about five miles distant; certainly she had not seemed to move to the extent of her own length since we caught sight of her.

Our canvas was now hollowing in. The white cloths came to the mast softly and shook the dew upon them on the deck. The sea was grown glassy under the moon, and round about were ice-like windings of tremorless water. The breeze was falling fast, and the heat that came in a sort of fold like a succession of swells out of the gathering calm was heightened to every sense by a vast play of shooting stars over our mast-heads. Tom stepped to the skylight to observe the time; it was something after ten.

The uproar was at its height again below. A hundred voices seemed to be singing a hundred different songs at once. In the midst of this, half a dozen figures came into the companion-way. They all talked as they ploughed up the steps, shoving one another in

their drunken scramble to keep steady. The first of them fell over the coaming and lay laughing and cursing; the next tripped over him, but recovered himself, with a mouthful of oaths, and with a stroke of his foot rolled the prostrate man aside. The fellow laughed like one choking, then lay motionless, and before the others had come up he was snoring.

One of these men was Barney Abram. He stood in the companion-way, holding on and looking about him with his figure stooped.

‘Here’s Butler!’ exclaimed a man, talking brokenly and hiccoughing. ‘Come below, my rooster. Ain’t ye longer one of us, old drummer? Come and drink. Don’t make it all greediness downstairs. Take your whack, my lobscouser, and let’s hear you sing.’

He extended his hand. Tom put it aside, but without temper.

‘I have drunk enough. I can’t stand the heat down there, and I can’t be there and here too, and the ship wants watching. Abram, you sing a good song.’

The prize-fighter came out of the com-

panion and stood in front of Tom, slightly swaying his body.

‘It’s bit of a cub-dowd!’ he exclaimed. ‘My wife wouldn’t like to hear of it. I cad fadcy her,’ he said, directing his moist eyes at the moon, ‘saying, “Bardey, ’ow could yer as a public bad?” By adswer would be exceedingly sipple: “Biriab, it was id bid-ocead, ad there’s dot a codger abugst the whole blazi’g boili’g of the fagots whose opidioid of be as a public bad I value at that!”’ He snapped his immense muscular fingers with the report of the explosion of a cap of a musket-nipple.

‘I’d rather have a shant o’ gatter (pot of beer) to blow an inch of tripe of nosey-nick-nacker with than a caskful of that devil’s fire on tap below,’ exclaimed one of the men. ‘It’s gammy for the head—gammy—gammy.’ He pulled off his cap and sent it with a kick flying overboard, and, putting his hands to his brow, groaned, swinging his head from side to side. He then blindly reeled over to a hen-coop, fell against it, kneeling, and stretched his length.

A third fellow, who had stood looking at

the moon for some minutes in silence, with a drunken, imbecile grin, began to cry. He snuffled and whimpered and exclaimed in broken, tipsy tones, 'What 'ud my poor mother think? Ho, yes, she brought me up in the straight ways, and this is what it's come to. Never was there a better scholard nor me nor vun more promising till I fell in with a sneaksman. It was all along of a footman——' Here he blubbered and could not go on.

'Ark at Sipsod shedding tears!' exclaimed Abram. 'What's 'e got to cry about? Let the people he robbed cry. Bates, cub dowl a'd 'ave a drink.'

The convict named Simpson shuffled to the companion-hatch, with some trouble got his leg over the coaming, and then fell down the steps.

'I've had all that I can stand up under, Mr. Abram,' answered Bates, 'thanking you kindly.'

'I wish you'd sing another song, Mr. Abram; I never heard so powerful and manly a voice,' said I, hoping by this to get him below, where a few more drams would finish him.

‘I studied busic udder the great Jo’d Brahub,’ he answered, wagging his head with his indescribable leering smirk, that was deepened and made more repulsive, if possible, by the drink he had swallowed; the moon shone very clear, and expressions on the face were easily read. ‘If I car’t si’g, who cad? By lay was Hi-taliad opera, but the ri’g answered by purpose better.’

This he spoke in the most gentlemanly manner his tipsiness would suffer. Mr. Bates saw my meaning.

‘I’ll go with you below, sir, and drink your health, and hope to have the pleasure of hearing you sing another song.’

‘Cub along,’ said the prize-fighter, and both men went down the steps.

The din in the cuddy was still vile and distracting; but it wanted its former volume. I looked through the skylight and found as much of the table as I could see thick with the stupefied brutes, who, seated, lay upon it from their waists in every sort of drunken posture, most of which not a man amongst them could have put himself into had he

been sober. A score and more lay without life or motion on the cabin deck, but numbers were awake, and pannikins of grog were being handed along. The haze of the tobacco smoke hung dark as a river-fog.

I walked to the break of the poop and counted some twenty or twenty-five dark figures lying helplessly insensible in various parts of the main- and quarter-deck; men reeled out of the cuddy, as I looked, fell down, with their hands outstretched, and never moved. It was as Tom said: the wretches had not tasted liquor for months, and many of them for years, and now they had been swallowing fiery ship's rum, I know not how many degrees above proof.

(I once, in Mr. Stiles's time, put my tongue to a 'neat' dram or 'tot,' as it is called, and was burned as though by a flame.)

Numbers, I doubted not, had swallowed the burning poison undiluted. The spectacle of the quarter-deck, above all the sight of the figures lurching out and then dropping as though shot, was sickening and frightful.

I went back to Tom. As I passed the

skylight, Abram began to sing ; but his voice was full of drink, very hideously thick and his delivery tuneless. I was sure, after pausing an instant to listen, that he would soon be amongst those who were laid low.

‘I shall make for that brig,’ said Tom, ‘when we get away.’

I strained my sight, and then barely distinguished the vessel in the obscurity some distance from the edge of the flood of moonshine.

‘It’s a dead calm,’ I said.

‘It matters not,’ he answered.

‘Shouldn’t we first contrive to roll those fellows off the poop?’ said Will at the wheel, meaning the figures upon the deck.

‘It’ll take them all night to sleep off what they’ve got,’ answered Tom. ‘I hope Bates won’t allow them to make him drunk. He’s afraid of Abram.’

‘Where are the rest who came up with the prize-fighter?’ said I.

‘Gone below for more drink.’

We stood conversing in whispers. Abram’s singing had subdued, but only subdued, the

noise in the cabin, yet we could hear one another when we whispered. After twenty minutes, Mr. Bates came up. I regarded him anxiously. His face shone in the moonshine as though he had just lifted his head out of a bucket of oil.

‘The heat below! Oh, the heat below! It’s wonderful they’re not all dead men!’ he exclaimed.

He told us that he had managed to empty his pannikin on the deck before putting it to his lips. They had handed him pure rum to drink. Had he swallowed the dose he must have fallen down insensible. The people close to him were too drunk to observe him. He dexterously, whilst seeming to watch Abram, as though to catch his eye to drink his health, poured out the contents of the pannikin, and did not know that the rum had splashed over a man’s face until he looked down. The man, lying like one dead upon the deck, received the discharge without a stir. It seems, however, that Mr. Bates need not have put himself to any trouble to feign drinking. Abram got on to the double chair

and began to sing, without taking any notice of the mate. In the midst of his song he stopped to lift a pannikin to his lips, which he emptied, and was then proceeding, when the upper chair gave way and he fell. After the prize-fighter had lain a few moments groaning in sickness, he clawed his way to one of the cabins, and Bates came on deck.

Soon after eleven o'clock, a tipsy figure, approaching Tom, stood lurching and backing and filling. The man was a sailor. He asked, with a drunken, broken laugh, if he should take the wheel.

'Get away to your hammock!' shouted Tom. 'We'll see to the ship. Off you go, and tell the rest of you to turn in till you've slept the drink off.'

The man went reeling forward, and in a maudlin voice broke into a song as he worked his way off the poop.

But nothing could be done till the silence of drunken sleep was upon the ship. I never could have dreamed that of two hundred and twenty odd convicts, all would have overpowered themselves with liquor. There were

grey-haired men and men of education, people who had filled good positions ashore. One, as I have said, was a surgeon, another had been an officer in the army. There were several clerks and young fellows who had been apprenticed to respectable callings. One had been a harbour missionary. No need to lengthen the dismal catalogue. A few, at least, I had thought would have held aloof from the hellish revelries of the cuddy, have come on deck and breathed the fresh night-air and watched the beautiful moonlight after a moderate sup or two from Abram's and the hare-lipped man's buckets. Such persons I had looked for, and wondered how we should be able to get away without their hearing or observing us. But, it seems that there was not a convict in the whole living mass of wretches, counting two hundred and thirty souls, less Tom and the fellows that had lost their lives in the morning, who had not entered heart and soul into this hideous merry-making.

Tom found out that by going down the companion-steps and taking a view of the

interior. The hour was then about a quarter to twelve. About half a score of the felons were still awake, but drinking always. They were too drunk to make much noise, and happily too overtaken in liquor to be able to light their pipes. The heat was killing, Tom said. He should not be surprised if several of the people were found dead.

‘Bates,’ said he, ‘get you now down with Will and overhaul the slop-chest and bring up what you know is needful. They’ll take no notice of you in the cuddy. They’re nearly blind drunk; they’re at the aftermost end where Abram was, and the atmosphere’s black with tobacco, and the cabin lights burn pale. Johnstone, I don’t want Marian to leave my side. Here’s the key of my cabin-door. Bring up the clothes.’

Bates and my cousin went away. Tom now said he would go the round of the ship.

‘We must see all the lights out before we leave her,’ said he. ‘Think of a fire with the people in the state they’re in!’

He walked to the lifeless figures on the poop and moved them with his foot; they lay

as senseless as the plank they rested on. He then passed down the steps and I lost sight of him. I guessed that the convicts had been too drunk to climb the poop-ladder, or to attempt the poop by the companion-steps; that was why there was none on this deck save those two or three of Barney Abram's party who had stumbled, and, being down, had instantly slept.

I looked into that part of the night where the brig lay and dimly discerned her. I forget where the moon at this hour stood, and with what bulk she had risen. Silence was gathering on the convict ship. Occasionally the hoarse, tipsy call of a man in the cuddy vexed the ear, but those noises were rare, and I was pretty sure that another quarter of an hour would do the wretches' business and sink them in the universal stupor. I wondered if the moon had ever before shone down upon a more shocking picture of human bestiality. And yet how exquisitely was the ship painted by the night beam in the midst of that vast ocean hush! The sails hung like sheets of cloth of silver; every shroud had a glint that

resembled a thread of silver wire ; stars of white fire sparkled in the brass of the binnacle hood and in the glass of the skylights, and the rail seemed encrusted with diamonds and precious gems. The whole ship hung pale upon the sea, with never a pulse to rock her ; her spires rose phantasmally to the stars, but her beauty was ghostly and the horror of sin was in it.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

SHE ESCAPES FROM THE CONVICT SHIP WITH
HER SWEETHEART AND OTHERS

MR. BATES and Will arrived, each bearing a burden of clothes from the slop-chest. I advised the mate to go behind the mizzen-mast and shift his convict clothes at once. He seemed unnerved and wanting in spirit, as though broken down by the scenes and sights of the day and night, and obeyed me as if I had been Tom or his captain. Will was dressed as throughout ; it had strangely happened that no convict had forced him to exchange clothes. He went to Tom's cabin and brought up my bundle and monkey-jacket ; the latter I slipped on, throwing Tom's convict coat overboard with passion and loathing. Will told me that only two or three men were now awake in the cuddy ; one had

fallen under the table just as he had passed up through the steerage hatch.

I quitted the wheel to look through the skylight, but the waking men sat too far aft to be seen ; I heard the murmur of their fuddled voices, and was sure by the tones that the noise must cease in a few minutes. The picture remained as I have described it ; the convicts lay over the table and in twenty various postures. Under the table, and betwixt the table and the bulkhead, they were heaped up as though slaughtered. A dreadful smell rose through the open skylight. Fragments of broken pipes, shreds of wearing apparel, capsized pannikins and hook-pots, upset pails of rum covered the deck and table. I was sure that Tom was right in thinking that when those senseless, beastlike shapes came to be looked at in the morning, many would be found corpses. Mr. Bates, having changed his clothes, stood beside me dressed in a suit of black cloth and a cloth cap. He said : ‘ Shall Johnstone and I start on provisioning the boat ? I shouldn’t like to act without instructions from Butler.’

‘No time should be lost,’ I answered ; ‘but where will you find provisions, Mr. Bates?’

‘We’ll look around,’ he said. ‘I hope it mayn’t come to our having to break out fresh stores.’

‘We shall want nothing if the brig receives us,’ said I.

‘True ; but we must go away well provisioned nevertheless.’

Just then Tom came along the poop. He sprang on to the hencoop and placed some parcels in the boat, joined us and said : ‘I’ve secured the chronometer, a sextant, some charts and a tinder-box. All’s quiet now in the cuddy. What a terrible scene ! I was obliged to tread upon the bodies of men to look into the cabins. Many lie capsized upon their backs, their legs upon the seats. The light’s bad, yet I made out Abram on the deck of a berth. There’s a whole hundred and thirty people below in that cuddy ! Would any man credit the story of such a wholesale drugging and damning by drink ? They lie thick under the break there, and the main-deck’s strewn with them. The fore-

castle's empty. But all's not quiet yet in the ship,' said he, speaking very quickly and softly. 'A fellow under the bulwarks yonder sat up and called me by name. I took no notice. Two or three men just now staggered off the gratings on the main hatch to seek more comfortable resting-places. We must wait awhile.'

'Shall Johnstone and I get the boat provisioned?' said Mr. Bates.

'Aye, do your best, Bates, and promptly. Provision us as though we were to be a fortnight afloat.'

He strained his eyes in the direction of the brig. My cousin and the other left the poop.

The time slipped by. I stepped to the skylight and found the hour ten minutes to one. Bates and Will came and went and came again, and at every trip they brought a load. I believe they found ship's bread in the forecastle and some raw hams and drum-big tins of boiled meat in the galley. I asked no questions, however. The time of our departure was drawing near and I was frightened and nervous. I never could tell at what moment some of the convicts might get the better of

their stupor and come upon the poop for the whiteness of the planks and for the airiness of the lodging it offered. I could not persuade myself that so vast a number of persons should be as drugged and lifeless as though a strong dose of laudanum had gone to every dram. Yet, whether I credited it or not, I had but to use my eyes to witness the truth. I had but to descend the cabin steps, I had but to walk around the quarter- and main-decks of that now silent shadowy convict ship, to know there was scarce a man but was stone-senseless with rum. Sometimes a beastlike cry broke from below, sometimes a drunken shout sounded forward. These noises were startling, but we speedily found they signified nothing.

Tom went to the head of the starboard poop-ladder and looked and listened. He returned, descended the companion-steps, and, after looking and listening, put out all the lights. It was then about a quarter past two. The moon had made a deal of westing, and was red and shone no longer very brightly.

‘Johnstone,’ said my sweetheart, in a whisper, ‘have you a knife?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Cut the gig’s and yonder boat’s falls short off just under where they are belayed. Quick, my lad! Bates, it must be done.’

‘God help them!’ said the mate. ‘But there are sailors who’ll show them what to do should it come to a sudden call.’

Will came from his job. The gripes of our boat were then noiselessly cast adrift.

‘Jump in, Marian! Jump in, Johnstone!’ said Tom.

Will and I sprang into the boat and sat low, and in a moment or two the dark side of the ship swarmed upward as we descended. The boat splashed when she floated. Some fellow at that instant halloed long and dismally. The melancholy, dreadful cry was re-echoed by the sails, and the voice was as that of a strong man mortally wounded and yielding up his ghost in a death shout.

‘Some beast shrieking in a dream,’ said Will.

As he spoke, the figures of Tom and the mate leaned to the falls, and they came down the tackles into the boat, hand over hand.

The blocks were quickly unhooked, and Mr. Bates, with the boat-hook in his hand, poled us under the huge, dark counter of the *Childe Harold*. Three oars were noiselessly thrown over and paddled us clear of the ship.

Scarcely were we gone ten lengths when again we heard that strange, wild, melancholy, halloing cry. Tom said, 'Is not that a man there on the fo'c's'le?'

'Yes,' said Will; 'he is reeling and waving. He'll be overboard if he doesn't mind his eye.'

The fellow let fly a sudden yell.

'Curse him!' cried Tom. 'He sees us. Give way now.'

'There he goes!' cried Mr. Bates.

A cry like the scream of a gull came across the silent sea, and we heard the plunge and splash of the wretch. Mr. Bates and Will tilted their oars as though to put back

'Pull!' cried Tom fiercely.

'Won't you return to pick him up?' said the mate.

'Pull!' hissed Tom. 'Return to that ship? Pull! Break your backs! A suicide

in delirium. Let them all leap ! There's the peace of God over the side ; there's the devil's own hell within board. Pull !'

He strained at his own oar with fury ; the others plied with all their might. The boat buzzed over the smooth surface, the smudge of the craft for which we were making was dead on end over the bow. The moon hung low, large, and red ; the situation of our boat put the convict ship right over against the satellite, and the vessel was painted upon the red surface of the orb. Never did the ocean offer a more impressive night-piece. An awful horror went into the ship out of the fancy of the man drowning alongside. Her sails showed as though cut out of black paper against the moon ; her rigging ran in fine black lines ; the ship looked to be afloat in vapour, so smoky was the obscurity which moved over the face of that black, greasy calm in folds like smoke.

There was no more halloing ; so still was the breast on which the vessel lay that never a sound of the flap of canvas, the jar of a wheel chain, the clank of a topsail-sheet came

from her. Slowly she receded to the impulse of our oars; then sliding out of the sphere of the moon, she glimmered dimly and hovered like a pale cloud rising off the edge of the sea.

Tom and the others rowed steadily; they had slackened their rage, and the boat foamed along to the steady sweep of the blades. They talked as they pulled.

‘Bates, I wouldn’t have put back,’ said Tom, ‘if fifty of them had sprung overboard. It was too late. Once away from such a ship as that, it must be away for ever with us.’

‘You’re in the right. It was just the impulse to save life, Butler.’

‘I smell wind,’ said Will.

The mate turned his head and exclaimed: ‘Yes, there’s a dark line of wind to the south’ard, Johnstone.’

‘What will happen to the convict ship if a strong wind should catch her as she lies, without a living creature on the look-out or at the wheel?’ said I.

‘Let the masts be ripped out of her,’ exclaimed Tom, ‘She’ll be fallen in with.

Lie with dogs and rise with fleas ! The mere seeing her people, the mere listening to them makes a man feel a beast, because he's shaped like them. Oh, Bates, Bates, think of months of living with them ! Where's the brig !'

She was now showing in a big dark blotch at the distance of about two miles. Already the water was rippling to a light breeze, but no weight was in it to cause anxiety, by which I mean no vessel could be propelled by the draught as fast as we could row.

Tom said : 'Bates, you will leave it to me to explain. You and Miss Johnstone and her cousin will hear me spin my yarn. There'll be little to say. Only let this be understood : You're the mate and I'm the second mate.'

'Do you know, Tom,' said I, 'that you are still wearing the convict trousers and shirt ?'

'By Heaven, I had forgotten !' he cried, jumping up. 'Marian, take my seat and hold this oar.'

He went into the bows. Often had I pulled an oar upon the Thames and loved the diversion. I rowed now heartily with the

others, and little was lost by Tom leaving his seat. He shifted with a sailor's smartness in a few minutes, and hove his abominable convict apparel overboard. His dress was composed of such slops as the mate was attired in, black cloth and a cloth cap. He took the oar from me, and I seated myself again in the stern-sheets.

'That brig is hove to,' said I. 'Look at her. She seems to be waiting for us.'

I said this when she was half a mile off. She was then plain in sight; a small brig under topsails and main-topgallant-sail; the squares of those sails were outlined against the stars. She showed no light and hung visionary and silent in the voidlike gloom, the sea and the night being blent into a sort of flowing darkness by the blowing of the wind. We drew close, and Tom, throwing in his oar, stood up and hailed her. He got no answer. He hailed her four or five times, but all remained deathlike on board.

'The lookout sleeps well,' said Mr. Bates.

'She is derelict,' said Tom. 'I've been thinking so ever since soon after I first saw

her. Shove alongside ; get aboard and trim if there's no one to do it for us ; this breeze'll help to put the *Childe Harold* behind the horizon before dawn.'

The vessel had, as most craft had in those days, platforms called channels at her side, for spreading her lower rigging. She was a little brig. The channels sat low and were but a step from our gunwale. I easily got over the side with the others, and Will took a turn with the boat's painter to secure her. The low moon gave no light now to see by, the starshine was faint, and the decks of the brig ran dark fore and aft. We made out a house running the length of the quarter-deck. The door was closed. Tom threw it open and shouted long and loud. No voice answered. Not a sound was returned in answer. You heard nothing but the rippling of the breeze-stirred waters along the bends. The mate went forward and beat upon the foreshuttle and bawled, and still we got no answer.

It was sure we had lighted on an abandoned ship, so far as life went ; that she had been the theatre of a tragedy and was yet

freighted with some secret horrors remained to be discovered.

‘Has she a boat forward, Bates?’ called Tom.

‘No boat, sir.’

‘Jump into the quarter-boat, Johnstone, and hand the things out of her. She’ll tow astern till daylight.’

‘There is the hand of God in this, Butler,’ said Mr. Bates, solemnly, whilst he received the things from Will out of the boat.

‘Is the hand out yonder amongst those drenched sleepers?’ answered Tom, sullenly and gloomily. ‘Who the devil are we to sail away with Providence? You flatter yourself, Bates. Is everything out of that boat, Johnstone?’

The lad answered, ‘Yes,’ climbed over the side, gave the tinder-box and matches to Tom, then helped the boat astern with the painter.

‘We’ll trim sail,’ said Tom.

‘What course, sir?’ said the mate.

‘Oh, south—south!’ cried my sweetheart.

‘A sure course for somewhere by-and-by;

but to the south'ard now—to the south'ard now!'

The wind was about north-east. Tom put me to the wheel, which was fixed in the old-fashioned style in front of the after-deck house. My sweetheart tried the helm, then bade me hold the spokes, and the three of them squared the yards on the fore and the main masts.

It was the blackest of the dark hours, and the brig slowly floated forward in deep shadow. The only noise was the rippling and jerking of the *Childe Harold's* quarter-boat in our wake. Will asked if he should light the binnacle lamp. Tom said no; he'd show no light on deck. The next thing to be done, he said, was to sound the well and make a light secretly in the deck-house cabin to read the rod by. They left me at the wheel, steering by a bright star at the starboard foretopsail yardarm, and after they had searched a while gropingly for the rod, the mate put his hand upon it. They were obliged to draw the pump to sound. Tom and Bates then carried the rod into the deck-house, where they

chipped a light and read the rod by the small glare of a sulphur match.

Tom came out and said to me, 'There are eighteen inches of water in the hold—nothing to take notice of, if she's been long abandoned. Johnstone, you and I will take first spell at the pump.'

They drew their coats off, and in a very little while the pump was pulsing steadily to their muscular, sailorly strokes, and the water sobbed as it gushed to the scuppers and spouted into the sea.

'I don't care what Captain Butler says,' exclaimed Mr. Bates, standing alongside of me, 'there's the finger of God in this!' And he pulled off his cap and turned his face up to the stars. 'There is something solemn and wonderful to me in this escape. Look how it all seems to have been planned. The drunken revelry of the convicts; the light air of wind blowing us into sight of this craft, then falling, as though to leave her within reach of us; then this brig herself, instead of an open boat—not the better for being abandoned, though but for that she'd not

be here. I say it's solemn and wonderful, and I'm grateful!' And he again upturned his face.

I made no answer.

After a bit, the mate went to the pump, which they plied for some twenty minutes before dropping the rod again, when such a sensible decrease of water was observed as to satisfy Tom and Bates that the brig was tight. At the expiration of half an hour they came to the wheel to rest. Will fetched chairs out of the deck-house and we sat, the mate keeping the wheel steady, though he was seated; indeed, the brig, with square yards and a sea nigh as smooth as a plain of ice, wanted little or no steering.

'There's a big sheet of paper lying on the cabin table,' said my cousin.

'A chart, perhaps,' said Tom.

'How did this abandonment come about?' exclaimed Mr. Bates. 'Everything's right aloft; I reckon the hull's sound; she looks a staunch little craft. What drove the men out of her?'

'Are they out of her?' said Tom.

‘What do you mean?’ I asked.

‘I once boarded an abandoned schooner when I was second mate,’ he answered; ‘she was deep with wheat. Everything was as right with her as it is with this brig. I looked into her fore-castle and found five men dead on her deck, and in the cabin lay a sixth corpse. Bates, sailors hear and see so much that they soon forget to wonder and they never ask questions.’

‘True, Butler. A deal’s happened since yesterday. And I don’t see the end of the traverse yet.’

‘Marian,’ said Tom, ‘you are frightfully tired. Oh, Bates,’ he cried passionately, ‘think of what this lady has undergone for me and is still undergoing! So good, so loyal, so—so——’ His voice broke, he ceased, and I put my arm round his neck. ‘Dearest,’ he said, after a minute or two, ‘we’ll find a spare sail and make you a bed in that house there.’

‘I couldn’t sleep. Let me be with you till we are sure that all’s well.’

‘All is well.’

‘I’ll wait for daybreak,’ said I. ‘I want to know the convict ship’s out of sight.’

Will went to the rail to look for her. The rippling of the waters, parted by the brig’s bows, was sweet as music; it was easy to guess our speed at between three and four knots; unless some convict’s good angel should steer the *Childe Harold* she’d come aback and float motionless till the self-drugged creatures and the sailors awoke and arose and looked around, so that by daybreak, which was yet two hours off, we should have added a full six miles to the five at which the brig had been stationed when we sighted her. But then by daybreak would there be ever a man of the whole sodden mob equal to lifting his eyelids, and realising how we had served them? There was nothing to fear from that ship and her freight; and still I would not rest, for I wished to watch with Tom and to behold the day break and view the scene of ocean it disclosed, with my own eyes.

The waiting until the light of the morning glimmered in the east was long and weary. Yet through that time the weak breeze blew

and the brig stemmed softly onward with a now steady swaying of her trucks and a pendulous flap of her canvas, for on a sudden a heave of swell had come rolling through the ocean ; it was out of the north-west, and Mr. Bates thought there would be wind behind it. We talked of the people who had been sent adrift yesterday morning, wondered how they had fared throughout the night, whether they would be picked up, what would become of them. We talked of the convicts. Tom told the mate that for three weeks the conspiracy had been maturing ; by a single word he could have preserved the ship and the lives of those who had been slain, and he sooner would have torn out his tongue. I related my own experiences ; exactly acquainted Mr. Bates with Will's share in my stowaway adventure, and described my sufferings in the store-room under the forecastle. Thus we conversed ; we had much to tell.

Mr. Bates said that by the convicts' uprisal he had lost about two hundred and fifty pounds' worth of property. Tom laughed low and savagely.

‘How do I stand?’ said he. ‘Would two hundred and fifty pounds buy me back what has been taken from me?’ Then, giving a loud unnatural laugh, he clapped the mate on the back and cried, ‘There’ll be more than two hundred and fifty pounds in this brig for you as a salvage job. You came off with your life yesterday morning. That was good. This morning you clamber aboard more than the value you have been plundered of. That’s good still. Why, Bates, cheer up. Did I ever ask if you were a married man?’

‘I have a wife and two children, Butler.’

‘Where do you live when you’re with them at home?’

‘Rotherhithe.’

‘D’ye remember, Bates, that I boarded the *Childe Harold* with Miss Johnstone and this lad in the docks? You were at the main-hatch, and I shook hands with you, and you asked me who was that fine girl. We’ve seen some changes since then.’ He sighed heavily and put his hand upon mine. ‘Yes, I should have known you were married, Bates. I think you told me—was it at Callao?—of the birth

of a little one whilst you were away. A sweet, noble and manly calling is the sea. How it does promote love between husbands and wives by long separation! How faithful are sailors' wives to their husbands ashore! How loyal their husbands when abroad! And how munificently does the calling of the sea reward us, Bates! How many volumes would be needed to contain the names of the rich sailors who live in mansions in England and ride in coaches! How gentle, virtuous, religious, are the hearts which the ocean slips into the hairy breasts of mariners! I was a good friend to Rotch. I never knowingly spoke an ill word to Nodder. I am innocent as surely as Christ sits on the right hand of God! Oh, the devils! the devils!' He started up and walked to the bulwarks and stood motionless and silent for many minutes.

None of us spoke till he rejoined us. I longed to go to stand beside him with my arm round his neck, but there had been a fierce cry for loneliness in his final words, an impassioned appeal to be left to himself in his manner of going from us which I must have

been deaf and blind not to have heard and seen.

The dawn broke in a faint lilac all along the eastern seaboard. We stood up to look around. It was quickly a shining morning, and the rim of the sea ran round the brig flawless. Not a feather-tip of distant topmost canvas broke the continuous sweep of the horizon. My cousin, at Tom's command, trotted up into the maintopmast crosstrees, and at that elevation surveyed the great expanse of sea. He looked and looked, and then shouted down that there was nothing in sight. A few clouds in the north-west, whence the swell was running; but the breeze was still out of the north and east—a light wind that, with the small canvas the brig expanded, gave us about four knots.

When we saw that the ocean was bare, we gazed with curiosity at the little ship we were aboard of. Tom told Bates that he reckoned her about two hundred tons. I have her before me as though I stood on her deck at this moment. She was brig-rigged. Her lower masts were painted white. Her bulwarks

were tall and pierced for six guns, three of a side. She carried, however, but two small carronades, one on either hand amidships, and a small pivoted brass piece on her forecastle. The inside of her bulwarks was painted green ; the planks of the deck were white ; and she looked a very staunch, strong, clean little ship. A tiny caboose stood just abaft the forecastle. Her long-boat was gone, and she was without a boat. The after-part of her deck was filled with a long house, with a narrow gangway on either side to enable you to pass aft. This house sparkled with little windows ; it was painted white and green, and a short flight of steps conducted you to the roof, that was somewhat elegantly protected by a brass rail. Everything that met the eye was fine and smart. The harness cask, for instance, was handsome and hooped with brass ; the binnacle was as pretty a quarter-deck ornament as ever I saw ; the rigging was good, the sails fairly new, and all things in their place. The keen eyes of Tom and Mr. Bates found nothing amiss anywhere. Yet she had a somewhat mildewed look, as of a craft that had been for

some time drifting about without men, and in a short hencoop on the main deck lay eight or nine dead cocks and hens.

Tom overhung her side, and said that she was black, with a gilt line running her length. He sounded the well when the light came, and found the water exactly at the height at which it had stood when they had left off pumping.

‘Bates,’ said he, ‘we’ll get that quarter-boat aboard presently. First let’s overhaul the vessel and see what sort of yarn about herself she can spin us. Will, hold the wheel. My lad, you look half dead ; you used not to look so when we went our walks with Marian. You shall take rest soon—but there’s something to be done first.’

He picked up my bundle of clothes off the deck, and I and Mr. Bates followed him into the deck-house.

Here all was as bright and clean as though the brig were fresh from the hands of the artificers. The sunshine streamed through a central skylight. I counted six cabin doors, three of a side. The furniture consisted of an oblong table, chairs, a couple of lamps, a

tell-tale compass, and other such matters. The first thing that took our sight was a large square of paper nailed to the table. It was the back of a white chart, and upon it was a quantity of writing in a large, sprawling hand. Tom twisted it round without pulling it from the nail, and the mate and I stood beside him and gazed at the giant missive. Close to where the paper was perforated was the drawing of a coffin; upon the coffin lid in relief was sketched the figure of a man. The face of the man was undoubtedly a portrait. It was a rude performance, but good. To the left was a skull, well done; to the right, cross-bones. Under 'To all concerned,' Tom read aloud:

'This brig is the *Old Stormy*, of Liverpool, bound to Cape Town with a small general cargo. John Wilson, master (his portrait's on the coffin); William Nash, mate, now mince-mate, and thanks be to God for the smallest kindness shown to sailors.

'We sailed out of the Mersey. Our ship's company was five seamen and a cook. The provisions were middling good till we got out

to sea, then the little that was sweet had been scoffed, and what came next was rot and stench—rot in the bread-bag where the worms were and stench in the harness cask where the meat was.

‘We had been promised a daily allowance of rum. Clear of Soundings the rum gave out. The captain said there had been a mistake in the shipping of the stuff, and we got no more.

‘But what was this to his and the mate’s usage of us? To you, if it concerns you, the bleeding mongrel, half-stripped by the mange, gone mad and chased with pitchfork and brickbat, was tenderly served, compared with us forecastle hands.

‘Yet we kept all on turning to, and we endured till patience dropped dead and Cain stepped aboard. It happened just to the nor’ard of the Equator, and when it was over there were six pale men left, but never a thumb-nail width of mess. No, and there’d been no noise. No, and swift was the job. Next thing to be done was to get away out of it. Vom-us! was the word. Not a man

could measure the sun's height, so we've agreed to go. And our reasons are twenty. You, if you're concerned, find them out. So here I sit, on a Friday night, writing this down as a warning with a moral in its tail: Take heed, all you ruffian skippers and mates, how you ill-treat good men.

‘W. M., A.B.’

Tom ceased, and we looked at one another.

‘The man who wrote that never sailed in a ship's forecastle,’ said Mr. Bates.

‘Why not?’ said Tom. ‘There was a University man before the mast in one of my ships. Is it the education here that palls ye? I believe every word of it.’

‘Butler, the brig's been boarded,’ said Mr. Bates, ‘and found abandoned, and some joker scrawled out this piece of humour before leaving.’

‘I believe every word of it,’ repeated Tom, running his eye over this huge ocean address to those concerned. ‘How long would it take you to draw those things and think and write

this out? No man would come prepared with it. Where'd he get the facts? We'll look for the papers' He tried to draw the nail, broke the sheet from it, glanced at the other side (the Portuguese coast) and rolled it up.

The foremost berth on the port side had been the captain's. Seemingly nothing had been touched. Some clothes hung against the bulkhead; there was bedding in the narrow fore and aft bunk. All the necessary appliances for the navigation of the vessel were here: Two good chronometers snugly stowed in hair in a locker, a sextant and a quadrant, mathematical instruments, such charts as the voyage might demand, and the needful navigating books. A little hinged table stood open in a corner; upon it was a plain writing-desk with the key in the lock, and inside a parcel of letters in a woman's writing, some note-paper and a bag of sovereigns, which Tom counted and made twenty-two.

'Where's the log-book?' said Mr. Bates.

'Here'll be her papers,' said Tom, after opening a locker.

He pulled out a tin box and read the

papers with the quickness of a man used to such documents.

‘This is the brig *Old Stormy*,’ said he. ‘Two hundred and twelve tons—cargo consigned to Cape Town—a rich freight!’ he added, whistling low, ‘pianos, pictures, vases, books, furniture, clocks, ornaments, clothes, and linen.’

Then he read out by whom the goods had been shipped, and to whom they were consigned. The name of the master was John Wilson, of the mate William Nash, and W. M. might be the seaman down as William Metcalfe.

The berth opposite had been the mate’s; here was found the vessel’s log-book, from the last entry in which we discovered that the *Old Stormy* had been abandoned about a fortnight since, a few leagues north of the Equator, so that she had drifted in that time to the southward through several degrees of latitude. This might very well have happened, seeing the canvas she was under. Two berths on the port side were empty, though equipped for use. I mean there were bunks and the

other berth furniture. On the starboard side the two cabins abaft the mate's we found respectively fitted as a store-room and pantry. All the provisions for cabin use appeared to have been stowed in the store-room, and the little pantry was as well stocked in crockery, glass, and the like as the *Childe Harold's* before the convicts broke it up.

This survey was quickly made. Tom said :

‘There’s plenty to eat for four people and good rooms to sleep in. What’ll be the stock of fresh water? That’s next with us, Bates. Then pump her out and whip the quarter-boat aboard.’

‘It’s a solemn and wonderful deliverance,’ exclaimed Mr. Bates.

‘It’s lucky,’ said Tom, coldly. He looked at the mate and burst out fiercely : ‘Get sentenced as an innocent man to the hulks, and all the gratitude you’ll be capable of afterward shall fill the skin of a flea.’ Then controlling himself he added : ‘You’ll have been a reader of the shipping papers in your day, Bates. There’s nothing of the miraculous in the derelict. How many after this and

bigger patterns are fallen in with in a year?' He then said to me: 'Marian, here are your clothes. Which cabin do you choose?'

'Choose one for me, Tom.'

'The best,' said he; and he carried my bundle into the cabin which we had first explored.

I said nothing; his will was my law; he could have broken my heart by a fierce look or an angry speech.

'You have worn this masquerade too long,' said he, putting his hand upon it. 'It unsexes my noble girl. Here is everything for comfort. I will fetch you water. I want to see my Marian refreshed and dressed—my proud and handsome girl again—as she was when I deserved her.'

'Tom, you thank me sadly for following you. Deserve me! Never was man loved as you are now. And you reproach me for following you? Suppose I had taken the next ship. The outbreak has happened in the meantime. We should have been separated for ever.'

'I'd have found you! I'd have found

you !' he cried, passionately pulling me to him and kissing me, heedless of Mr. Bates, who stood in the open door looking about him ; but, indeed, I minded as little as Tom that the mate should see us.

My sweetheart went out, and presently returned with a bucket of sparkling brine.

' Now, Marian,' said he, ' see to yourself whilst we see to the brig. Come along, Bates. She's but two hundred and twelve tons, and there are three of us.'

CHAPTER XXXIX

SHE RELATES HOW HER SWEETHEART RESOLVES
TO HIDE IN AN ISLAND

THE salt water refreshed me greatly, and my cheeks burned like roses and my eyes shone when I had dried myself. A square of mirror hung near the washstand. I had thought to see myself looking ill and yellow and wretched ; and my breast swelled at sight of my handsome, sparkling face, so proud did my beauty make me feel for Tom's sake.

And yet I was now grown so used to my male attire that when I had clothed myself in my Woolwich dress, as I call it—and scarcely less strange than my own were the fortunes of this bundle of apparel—I found myself very uneasy. I missed the freedom of my legs. I don't wonder that women should struggle from time to time to invent a dress that gives their limbs the liberty which men

enjoy. However, I clothed myself very carefully, and when I had put on my hat I thought I looked the saucier and more piquant for my hair being cropped short. Do not call this egotism. It is my way of telling the story. I who relate it am old, and my youth and beauty are as the dust of half a century.

When I was dressed I stepped out to be of help. Will was at the little wheel in front of the house. He gave a jump and his dear face brightened up.

‘Hang me,’ he cried, ‘if that dress don’t bring Stepney close aboard! It is but a step to the Tower, surely! And when my trick’s up we’ll go a-rambling Epping way.’

Tom and the mate were at work at the pump. Tom kissed his hand and the mate lifted his cap. A few minutes later the water ceased to flow.

‘A tight little ship!’ cried Tom; and he and Mr. Bates came to me.

‘D’ye remember her now, Bates?’ said my sweetheart, looking at me proudly and with love.

‘Yes. And to think that I should have

bullied you on the poop, Miss Johnstone, when your cousin brought you to ask me for a bed! I beg your pardon now,' said the worthy fellow, and he slowly bowed low.

'Marian,' said Tom, 'I wished you to rest; but you look so brisk I'll allow you to keep awake for another hour. Hold this little wheel and keep the brig's head just as it is. There's much for the three of us to do, and, chiefest of all, there's breakfast to get.'

I took the wheel and they went to work, and first they got the quarter-boat's sail out of her and stretched it over my head as a shelter from the sun. This done, they hoisted the quarter-boat. Will found the carpenter's chest, split up some wood, went into the fore-peak for coal and lighted the galley fire. Whilst this was doing Tom and Bates searched the brig and found her stock of fresh water in a considerable quantity just under the main hatch. They explored the fore-castle, but met with nothing to tell them whether the story on the cabin table was true or not. The sailors had left their blankets, but taken their traps. They were British sailors, and the

weight of their clothes was not very likely to imperil the safety of the boat.

The morning was brilliantly beautiful; the breeze almost astern, the swell on the quarter, and the brig softly and silently rippled onward, gently heaving and breathing as she went, as she lifted with the long ocean folds flowing in pale blue out of the north-west. I found it easy to steer. The little vessel, like a thoroughbred to the lightest pressure of its rein, answered to a movement of the spokes; I held the course as I found it dead to the lubber's mark; indeed, I think it is easier to steer with a wheel than a tiller.

I sank into a deep reflection over what had passed since yester-morning. Did I feel grateful for the mercies vouchsafed—mercies linked like miracles, so wonderfully and inexpressibly fortunate to us had the incidents since the outbreak proved in their succession down to this, our lighting upon an equipped, well-stocked, sound, and abandoned vessel? I fear I was not grateful. I did not lift up my heart in a single syllable of thanks. My spirit was savage with memory, spite of our gracious

and consoling fortune ; my passion for Tom overmastered me ; as he felt, so I felt ; what was in his mind that I could find in his eyes and speech instantly filled and possessed my own mind. Had he knelt in prayer I should have knelt ; but he had told Mr. Bates that gratitude lay dead in him, so it slept in me. Luck had befallen us ; but so much had gone before which was not luck, except it were of the devil's sort, that I raged when I thought of it, and felt that nothing ever could happen good enough to thank Heaven for.

Will, who acted as cook this first morning, prepared a tolerable breakfast. Coffee had been found and marmalade ; the lad fried a dish of the *Childe Harold's* ham, and these things with biscuit and sugar furnished us with a meal. The provisions we had brought with us from the convict ship had been stowed by Bates and Tom in the store-room. Had we met with nothing on board, that stock we had come with would have lasted a month or six weeks.

I spied three eggs amongst the dead hens in the coop, and told Mr. Bates of them ; they

were the last efforts of the poor, unhappy, starved poultry. The mate wondered that the rats had spared them and the birds. He picked them up and Will cooked them, and they proved—ah! I laughed to see Mr. Bates holding his nose and throwing the cocks and hens overboard; such work fitted ill with the dignity of a man who was just now chief officer of one of the finest of the Blackwall liners.

That we might break our fast together whilst one of us steered, the dishes and cups were set upon the deck and we used our knees for tables. The brig went along so quietly that you could let go of the wheel for minutes at a time, without a quarter-point of deflection in the compass bearing. We were hungry and thirsty; the boat's sail overhead cast a pleasant shade upon us; the breeze blew through the little gangway on either hand of the house and fanned us whilst we breakfasted.

Mr. Bates and Will talked much of the convict ship, of the chance of her people, and the like. Tom sat quiet, and I thought moody. Often he fastened his eyes upon me, but with

a look as though he saw something beyond. I feared that he was overwrought and dead wearied, and I longed to pillow his head on my arm that I might watch him sleeping. All on a sudden he flushed up and, with a hard, small, satiric smile, whilst his eyes seemed to brighten into fire as though taking light from the contrast of the blood in his cheeks, he cried :

‘Bates—but what right have I to call you Bates? I should “mister” you, hey?’

‘Oh, Tom, dear!’ I exclaimed.

‘Why, see here, now,’ he continued, and he spoke fiercely: ‘I’m a convict, Bates. There’s no getting away from that. Do you call this liberty? No more than the liberty of a wretch who breaks from a hulk, who’s a convict while he swims, who’s a convict when he lands, who goes to his grave a convict, though he keeps free.’

The mate looked at me with alarm.

‘You’re a good fellow, I believe,’ Tom went on, ‘and you think me a wronged, innocent man. But I’m a convict always. Why, haven’t you watched me whilst I

tramped in a gang to the tune of a fiddle, watched me at a felon's work about the deck of the ship you were chief mate of, watched me with the irons upon my legs as I shuffled out of the hatch to the cries of a brother-convict? You're a respectable man—oh, very respectable! So was I once, but they swore my liberty and honour away and broke my heart. Doesn't this association with a convict and his familiar accost of you as "Bates" shock your respectability?'

I could not bear his wild looks nor to hear more. I flung my arms round his neck and burst into tears.

'Butler,' said the mate, 'this is uncalled-for. What you were when I first knew you, you still are. A more honourable heart never beat in a sailor's breast. Did they make me a convict yesterday by clothing me as one? No more they made you a malefactor by sentencing you. Soothe the poor lady and give me your hand, old man.'

I drew my arms from Tom. He took the mate's hand and stooped his head to it. Will, whose face worked with sympathy and distress,

motioned to me as though he would have me give my sweetheart time to rally. Presently Tom lifted his face. Tears were in his eyes, likewise an expression that warned me not to seem to heed him. The mate, with the tact of a gentleman, talked to Will about Captain Sutherland, whose lady he knew. He named certain ships which Sutherland had commanded. Thus he gossiped on, meanwhile proceeding with his breakfast.

Tom got up and walked to the bulwarks, and stood looking at the sea over the rail. I watched him with impassionate anxiety. I could not gauge his mood, and knew not what dreadful impulse might suddenly govern him. He rejoined us, and said, looking at the mate :

‘Your wish, of course, is to return to your wife and children?’

‘No unnatural wish, I hope, Butler,’ answered Mr. Bates, forcing a laugh.

‘What is to be done?’ exclaimed Tom, measuring a short length of deck with swift paces. ‘There’s no home for me to return to. I hate the thought of England. Let

me establish my innocence, and still I detest England.'

'Establish your innocence,' said the mate, 'and they'll grant you a free pardon, and the old country would be as it ever was to you.'

'Grant me a free pardon!' cried Tom, stopping in his walk and looking at the mate. 'What am I to be pardoned for? Sins I never committed! Pardon me? Curse them! Where would I go? I must think. Give me a globe of the world. Stab through England—through the heart of that little bog of land that bands and irons and exiles its honourable toilers—and where the point comes on out t'other side is the spot I'd choose, if you grant me but a rock there to live on.'

'My dear Butler,' exclaimed Bates, 'there is no need for me to assure you, I hope, that I quite see how you are situated. You have your liberty, and you must keep it.'

'Aye, indeed!' cried I.

'You must sail to some place where you'll be safe,' continued the mate. 'I owe you my life, and with your leave I'll stick to you

till I see you safe. We're brother-sailors, Butler. I know what's expected of me, and I know my own heart.'

'Mr. Bates, I thank you,' said I.

'It won't be human to carry you where I shall wish to go! exclaimed Tom. 'They'll get news of the convict ship at home, and your wife will think you dead. And, then, here's Johnstone.' He placed his hand upon the lad's shoulder. 'Must I carry him about with me till I've fixed a spot? He's got a good home and fond parents. And then there's his calling. Why, what kind of a precious outlook is this sort of thing for man, boy, or beast?' he exclaimed, with a sneer.

'It's seeing the world,' said Will.

Tom laughed, but with no face of merriment.

'What place is in your mind, Butler?' said the mate.

My sweetheart made no answer; his eyes were fixed upon me. Bates repeated his question, and still Tom gazed at me in silence.

'Marian,' said he presently, 'you are

with me, dearest. Is it your wish to remain with me ?’

‘Where you go I must go, if you would not break my heart.’

‘What’s there to prevent your living in England, Captain Butler?’ here interrupted Will. ‘Aren’t there wilds and solitudes in England in which a man could burrow as secretly as in the loneliest island in the ocean?’

I frowned, observing Tom’s face, and bade the boy hold his tongue.

‘I’d run no risks if I were you, Butler,’ said Mr. Bates. ‘Would ye take a suggestion or two amiss?’

‘What d’ye want to say, Bates?’

‘You’ll want a place where there are no English. No need to lift the Southern Cross into view to find it.’ He looked at me. ‘There are scores of villages in Spain, away over in Austria and Hungary, down in Italy and other Mediterranean nations, in any one of which, under any sort of colour you choose to fly, you’d flourish as secure—you and this lady as your wife—as if you mined

a lodging for yourselves in a Galapagos rock.'

'We'll not live in Europe,' said I; 'London is always too close there.'

'London's the safest place in the world to hide in,' said Will.

'Don't talk of hiding,' cried I, angrily.

'Bates,' said Tom, turning his eyes from me to the mate, 'it's under the Southern Cross you named just now that I mean to seek my lodging for life. Since it's come to this, I would to God this lady were my wife. But it's to be brought about. Patience! Patience! Oh, Bates, how often have I whispered this word "patience" to myself! But the consideration kinks the line for running, Bates. Long ago my mind was resolved that if ever I stole or got my liberty and had this true heart at my side, I'd dwell in the middle of the ocean in the very loneliest of the islands that are washed by salt water. D'ye know Tristan d'Acunha?'

'Tristan d'Acunha!' muttered Will, staring at me.

'It's inhabited,' said Tom. 'I've] been

ashore there, talked with Corporal Glass, sat in his house, made him presents.'

'An Englishman?' said I.

'Once an English soldier, getting on to be an old man now, Marian; ill of a cancer that will kill him; an honest man who'll welcome us. But there's no clergyman; there was none in my time.'

'The Cape isn't many weeks off,' said Bates.

'No, and that's in my mind, too. There are parsons there,' said Tom, 'and vessels to carry us to the island again; you and Will'll take the salvage you'll get on this brig at Cape Town, and so home.'

'English men-of-war touch at Tristan,' said Will.

'One in about eighteen years; whalers often enough, Marian, to find us fresh safety in the South Seas should a fit of flitting take us. There are goods under here,' said he, stamping the deck, 'that'll earn us a cordial hand-grip at Tristan. They'll represent my share of the salvage. Why, it's right that a convict should take what he wants, hey,

Bates? My life will be in your hands, of course.'

'I wish there was no other risk,' said the mate.

'Marian, this is not my scheme of this moment,' said Tom, sitting down beside me. 'I found it there,' said he, pointing to the sea and meaning the convict ship. 'But a new thought has come out of Bates's words; we'll touch at the island and I'll have a talk with Glass, get help to carry us to a port, and we'll return in a hired craft man and wife.'

I gave him my hand to hold; I could have wept with happiness to hear him talk thus. I had feared throughout that, loving me too well to yoke me to his fate, he would oblige me to go home with Will and the mate, and hide himself alone.

'Are you in earnest, Butler?' said Mr. Bates.

'Brutally in earnest.'

'Saints, Marian! what'll father and mother think to hear of you as living on Tristan d'Acunha?' cried Will.

‘That’s where it is!’ exclaimed Tom fiercely, rounding upon the boy, ‘I shan’t be safe!’

‘Not as my cousin’s husband?’ said Will. ‘Who’d talk?’

I frowned to silence him. I wanted no ill feeling between these two.

‘Who’s this Glass you speak of, Butler?’ said the mate.

‘When Cloete’s garrison was withdrawn, Glass was left as a volunteer in charge of a wreck and some military stores. That was in ’24. Two seamen of the St. Helena squadron settled on the island with him. You know, of course, that Tristan was occupied by a detachment of our artillery while Bonaparte was at St. Helena?’

‘Where did they find wives?’ said the mate.

‘Glass brought a mulatto woman from the Cape; the other settlers got negresses from St. Helena. The population was about forty when I was there; though some of the women are well-built and handsome, their complexions run from milk to chocolate.’

‘Suppose the convicts steer foul of the island,’ said Will.

‘Any houses?’ said the mate.

‘Cottages. They build them with blocks of lava.’

‘What’s to eat there?’ inquired the mate, who listened with a sober face of interest.

‘I can’t tell off-hand; fish and potatoes, I know; there’s a little fruit; they grow crops, and Glass told me of a number of wild goats and spoke of so many heads of cattle belonging to some of the people, along with poultry and pigs.’

‘We shan’t starve,’ said I, laughing.

‘There’s over eight thousand feet high of rock for me to hide under, Marian; and away down in the mightiest of all ocean solitudes too—’twixt the two Capes—and the climate’s delicious.’

‘Who’ll cash cheques there for you, Marian?’ said Will.

‘Tom,’ said I, ‘one question I’ll ask—what’ll be your story to the Governor Glass?’

‘Ay,’ said he, ‘that’ll be for you and me

to think out. Bates, there may be fifty respectable reasons why a man should loathe what's called his native country and expatriate himself. Or call it a whim. My wife and I,' said he, fondling my hand and faintly smiling as he looked at me, 'have a mind to live in mid-ocean. Whose business but ours is that? I've lost my ship. I'm a broken-hearted bankrupt. Who'll give me the lie? My brave girl loves me, and nothing must separate us. And so, Governor Glass, I say, with your good leave, I'll sail away and get married, and come back to you with my bride. Eh!' he cried, looking eagerly and hotly from Bates to Will. 'There's no lie there, I believe?'

'Why, sir, you have the yarn!' exclaimed my cousin.

'Johnstone spoke of cashing a cheque at Tristan,' said Bates, with a grin, which vanished in an earnest look. 'I shall get home, I hope, and if I can be of the least use——'

'Oh, thank ye, Bates; thank ye,' interrupted Tom. 'We're bound to go to civilisation to get married, you know, and there'll be

Miss Johnstone's opportunity for making the arrangements she may think proper.'

The mate gravely bowed his head.

'Marian, get to your cabin, dearest, and rest,' said Tom.

He rose, and I rose instantly with him. He took me by the hand, and we entered the berth he had bid me use. He tossed the bedding out of the bunk, leaving the mattress, which was new and clean.

'Sleep, dear one,' said he. 'God knows you need it.'

I was about to speak. He checked me, and said that rest was needful; that there was work to be done outside; that if he began to talk he'd keep me waking for hours, so full was his mind; then kissed and left me.

CHAPTER XL

SHE HELPS TO KEEP WATCH

I GOT into the bunk, but it was long before I fell asleep. The light was brilliant. The port was open, but the wind was aft and breezed through the gangways, and but little entered the cabin. I lay thinking over Tom's talk with the others, and my spirits danced and my heart beat with happiness. Isolation! There could be none where Tom was. And then we should be man and wife before he settled down upon that wonderful, remote, heaven-kissing island of the South Atlantic. My imagination made a paradise of it. I figured a handful of quaint cottages, a little community of people simple of heart, pure of life; I dreamed of wild-fowl gaily painted, of the huge breakers of the Atlantic roaring in foam and ramparting our ocean hiding-place, of sweet, cold fruit in volcanic hollows, and a

monstrous mountain marble-topped with snow. A hundred like imaginations made up the picture. But above all—but above all—was the promise of Tom's safety in that mid-ocean island; no other visitors than rough whalemen; in eighteen or twenty years but one man-of-war, and always the world on either hand, the Capes for choice of fresh retreats, any one of them as happy as a dream of Heaven to me whilst Tom should be at my side.

I awoke exceedingly refreshed. I guessed by the colour of the light that the afternoon was far advanced. The door of the cabin opposite stood hooked open, and in the bunk in that berth lay Tom sound asleep. I crept to his side and gazed at him. His expression was wild, as though some violent dream troubled his brain; his lips stirred and he breathed hard and short, frowning sometimes, with a tremble in his eyelids as though he was about to look at me. I put my lips to his forehead, whereupon he sighed deeply, ceased to mutter, and his face took an expression of repose.

Fearing to break his rest, I softly stepped out.

Some cold meat, biscuit, and other food were upon the table. Through the deck-house window I spied the head of Will standing at the wheel. I was hungry, and cut some beef and quickly made a meal, meaning to relieve Will at the wheel. A bottle of wine stood on a swing tray. I drank half a wine-glass of it. It was an excellent cordial sherry or Madeira brought from the store-room, where I had observed a number of such bottles.

When Will saw me he exclaimed, 'You have had a fine sleep! Your cheeks are red with it.'

'How long have you been standing here?'

'About an hour. I relieved Butler, who is lying down in one of the cabins.'

Mr. Bates at that moment came out of the caboose. He grinned as he walked aft and said, in his slow way, 'I never expected to turn cook when I shipped as chief officer, Miss Johnstone. But the galley fire must be seen to if we're to have hot water for a cup of tea. You seem the better for your sleep.' And he

stationed himself alongside of me, first casting a look upon the compass and then glancing aloft.

The breeze had freshened whilst I slept ; the swell was no stronger, but now the wind was freckling it with little featherings and dartings of foam. The brig was making good way, and hissed smartly onward. The west was rich with hot colours, and the sun hung there in a rayless, swollen mass, not distorted, but so huge that it filled me with wonder. Many little clouds, coloured to the complexion of blood, sailed across our mast-heads into the deepening violet of the east, where the ocean flowed like a sea of gilt—a marvellous contrast with the blue it brimmed to. ‘It reminds me,’ said Mr. Bates, pointing to it, ‘of a Chinese plain in the rice harvest.’

‘We are under the sail of the morning,’ said I.

‘Yes,’ he answered. ‘But I expect we’ll roll up the topgallant-sail and mainsail when Butler wakes up.’

‘Shall the four of us be able to manage till we reach Tristan?’ said I.

Mr. Bates gazed at me thoughtfully without speech.

‘Marian,’ said my cousin, ‘can’t you get this island scheme out of Butler’s head?’

‘I like it!’ I cried quickly.

‘The island’s a long way off,’ said Mr. Bates.

‘How far?’ said I.

‘About two thousand miles, Miss Johnstone.’

‘How long will it take us to get there?’

‘Perhaps a fortnight, perhaps a month,’ answered Mr. Bates.

‘I’m jolly sorry now,’ said Will, sinking his voice, ‘that we fell in with this brig. Not but that she isn’t deucedly useful and the very bucket to pray for—with such a cargo in her hold to salve, too, not to speak of the hooker herself—if it wasn’t for that smothering island of Tristan. But you’re never in earnest in deciding to settle there?’

‘Shall we be able to manage without further help, Mr. Bates?’ said I.

‘Why,’ said he, ‘it’ll be a tight fit. You’re pleased to speak of four of us.’ He smiled and gazed up at the masts. ‘Call us three

sailors and four helmsmen. But at sea what must be done often will be done.'

'If Captain Butler will let me wear my boy's clothes,' said I, 'I'll go aloft and try to be of use. But you can't climb in petticoats, Mr. Bates.'

'Marian, Butler will do anything for you,' said Will. 'Clap a purchase on his love and rouse this beastly island scheme out of him. We want to get home.'

'Who?' I asked.

'Mr. Bates and I.'

'I am pledged to stand by Captain Butler, Johnstone,' said the mate. 'He saved my life, and I'll stick to him till he sees his way to let me go.'

I seized the worthy man's hand and pressed it.

'Will,' said I, 'were you to live to be a hundred, the whole of the wishes of your long life would weigh with me no more than a grain of sand against Tom's safety.'

'But will he be safe at Tristan?' cried Will.

'Where would you carry him?'

‘Anywhere but to Tristan,’ answered the lad. ‘Won’t the man, Glass, that he talks of, discover who he is? Everything leaks out, even away down on a mangy rock in the middle of the sea. You’ll blab in a nightmare. They’ll not keep a convict——’

‘Never call him that, Will, or I’ll kill you!’ I shrieked, rounding upon him in one of my old swelling fits of rage, breast heaving, eyes sparkling, cheeks on fire.

‘I meant no insult!’ exclaimed Will. ‘Butler’s as innocent as I. I spoke of him as they’d think of him down in that island if they found out who he was. Or, let him hide there if he chooses. Is such an island as Tristan fit for you to live and die on——’

‘Oh, Mr. Bates,’ I exclaimed, passionately, ‘Will knows what I have sacrificed, what I have suffered, and he talks now as if I did not love Tom!’

‘Come and take the air on top of this deck-house, Miss Johnstone,’ said the mate. ‘We shall disturb Captain Butler if we stand here.’

My temper, however, soon cooled. I loved

my cousin too heartily to be long angry with him. He was little more than a boy, too. He believed in Tom's innocence, and had not meant to pain me. Mr. Bates and I walked with soft tread on the roof of the deck-house that Tom might sleep. Up there we got the full sweep of the breeze and a wide sight of the sea. I watched the magnificent picture of the dying day, the perishing glories in the west, the liquid gloom in the east with a trembling star just above the water-line shining like the white lantern of a lighthouse, and I conversed earnestly with the mate on Tom's scheme, explained that in any case he and I must go into hiding, and that the safest retreat must be the best, even though it should be a barren, melancholy rock in the middle of the ocean.

‘He was sentenced to fourteen years,’ said I. ‘If he returns before his time is up, and is caught, he will be transported for life.’

‘Yes,’ said the mate, ‘he told me that. And not long since it was a hanging offence.’

‘But what would be his punishment if they caught him now?’ said I. ‘He, a con-

vict, consents to take charge of a ship seized by convicts! They'd prove him a ringleader and kill him.'

I walked and talked for about half an hour with this kind and worthy man, told him a great deal about my early days, of my first meeting with Tom at Uncle Johnstone's, and entered at large upon my reasons for sailing in my sweetheart's ship as a stowaway instead of following him in a passenger vessel. I then got him to talk about his own life and of his wife and his children, and whilst we walked the evening drew down.

The brig was now rushing forward at a fine pace. Her topsails were large sails and her maintopgallant-sail was set, the weather clew of the mainsail was up, the lee clew aft, the staysails were down, the trysail brailed up, and the only sail foremost was the fore-topmast staysail. The wind had quartered the brig, and under her wide wings and over the smooth western heave that was now shrilly ridging the vessel drove along.

'She is a fine little ship,' said Mr. Bates, standing with me at the after end of the deck-

house. 'Our lighting upon her is a wonderful and solemn thing, and perhaps, after all, we shall one day learn that she was derelict for the reasons related in that queer letter we found below.'

Just then Tom came up the ladder. He held my hands whilst he asked me if I had slept well.

'My nap has made a new man of me,' he said. 'What's the weather going to be? Bates, there's a frisky spit in the water, isn't there? But there's no weight of wind as yet to hurt. Let's give her all she'll take. She walks, by Jericho! A fortnight of this will be bringing the corporal aboard.'

'What shall I do? Make me useful, Tom. Shall I get supper?' said I.

'Yes,' he answered. 'Is the galley fire in, Bates?'

'Ay, sir.'

'Tom,' said I, 'I'd like to shift these petticoats for my *Childe Harold* dress. You want seamen; I'll make you one.'

'You'll keep dressed as you are, Marian,' said he.

‘Very well, dear, but don’t rate me for being slow.’

I then went down the steps to the little caboose. The fire made a light here. I lighted a lamp, returned to the cabin for some tea, lighted the lamp there and also lighted the binnacle lamp for Will, who told me he was growing confoundedly sick of steering. I told him I’d take a spell at the helm when I had got supper ready. My labours aboard the convict ship had thoroughly qualified me, and no old hand as a steward could have gone to work more adroitly and with a clearer perception of needs. I brought a large pot of tea to the table, rearranged the food that was already there and added to it, and by eight o’clock all was ready and the interior of the deck-house as shining and comfortable a sea-picture as the eye could wish to rest on—quite hospitable and civilised, with a white cloth, good cutlery, and glass and crockery equal to the *Childe Harold’s*.

Before I was done, however, Tom and Bates had clewed up the maintopgallant-sail and furled it. They had also hauled the

mainsail close up to the yard, and I was in the cabin when Tom asked me to hold the wheel that Will might help him furl that big sail. This they accomplished smartly ; they were three sailors and strong, and after the rig of the convict ship the brig's fabric of yards and spars seemed no more than a long-boat's.

Having got hold of the wheel, I would not let go till one or all of them had supped. I was not hungry, and was much refreshed by my sleep, and I found a sort of pleasure in grasping the spokes and controlling the meteoric flight of the little vessel through the star-clad blowing darkness. I steered her as easily as I had steered a Thames wherry, and was proud and thankful to be of so much importance and use at such a time as this. And there was another feeling that swelled my heart whilst I held that wheel. It was as though Tom were mounted behind me, and I, with the reins in my hand, was thundering him to safety away from all risk and possibility of pursuit, across a boundless dark plain.

Presently Will, with a pipe in his mouth, steps out and lays hold of the wheel.

‘You again,’ said I.

‘Ay,’ said he, ‘but not for long. Get you in, old woman. They’re scheming watches and want you.’

‘Will,’ said I in his ear, ‘not another word against Tristan.’

‘Such a rat-hole to choose!’ said he. ‘No post-office, no bank, no docks, no tea-gardens! He’ll let me get home some day, I hope! But I’m mum on the matter from this moment. I don’t like your looks when you threaten me. You’d slit my throat to please Tom!’

I boxed his ear and entered the cabin.

I sat down beside Tom, who gave me some tea, and I made a light supper. He told me that he and I would keep watch till midnight, and Bates and Will till four. They would then relieve us. We did not sit long. Whilst I ate, our talk was all about Tristan. He seemed very resolved.

‘We’ll heave-to off the island,’ said he, ‘and I’ll go ashore or send for Glass. There

may be a parson on the island by this time. I hope so. It won't do to go away to the Cape and get married, Marian. Table Bay is all too public. The town's full of English, and then this brig's consigned there, and they'll want the story of our falling in with her and how it came about.'

'They'll print what they hear; they have newspapers,' said the mate.

'We'll see what help the islanders can give us. I'd sooner head west than east for a parson, Marian.'

'One should go west to get married. Heading east makes time, and the less time the better when the job's over—occasionally,' said the mate with a dull smile.

'We'd return in the brig to Tristan,' continued Tom, who seemed not to know that the mate had made a joke, 'and Bates and Will would proceed for the Cape with a yarn of falling in with the *Old Stormy* that'll utterly sink my name out of the matter.'

So saying, he went to his berth, and returned with a seaman's jacket and a good, almost new, shawl for the neck. He wrapped

me up, saying that I'd be obliged to stand sometimes at the wheel, whilst he looked about him; and that of a night, though a man be under the Line, yet, if it blows, he'll need plenty of clothes at the helm.

I took the wheel from Will, who went to a cabin to sleep. Bates lay down in the berth he had chosen; and Tom's and my watch began. It was then drawing on to nine o'clock. There was no moon as yet. The wind blew somewhat strong off the quarter, but it came warm. The dew was very heavy; and every time the brig rolled the reflection of a large, beautiful star just past the maintopsail yardarm shot like a summer flash of lightning along the wet deck. The brig was under very easy canvas, though the whole topsail and foresail swept her along in foam. The sea throbbed black over the rails, with here and there a little burst of phosphoric light in some head of curling yeast.

Sometimes Tom came to the wheel and held it, and then we talked 'shoulder to shoulder for half an hour together. Some-

times I'd sit in the cabin for rest and shelter, then steer the brig whilst Tom mounted to the roof of the deck-house to take a view of the sea.

About ten I think the moon rose and shone very yellow ; the sea looked vast, dark, and lonely when the orb floated clear of the dusky atmosphere over the edge of the ocean, and cast a sickly flickering wake upon the black tremble of waters under her. There was a little clock in the cabin ; it had been set right at noon that day ; when it was midnight by it I roused Will and the mate, and Tom and I went to sleep in our respective berths.

CHAPTER XLI

SHE VIEWS THE ISLAND OF TRISTAN D'ACUNHA

I FELL asleep quickly and my slumber was sweet, for it was one long dream of Tom. Earnest and full of passion at times had been our talk whilst we stood together at the wheel, and the imaginations of my slumber were richly coloured. At four Will awoke me, and I rose with the promptitude of a sailor, and had relieved Mr. Bates at the wheel before Tom came out of his berth. It was very dark. My cousin, instead of going immediately to his bed, went up the steps to the top of the house; he stayed two or three minutes, then putting his head over that we who stood below might hear him, for Tom had now arrived, he cried out: 'I guess I was right; now I'm sure of it. Captain Butler, there's a sail dead in our wake, and she seems to be overhauling us hand over fist.'

Tom and the mate ran up ; presently Will looked over and called down : ‘ Marian, star board—d’ye understand me ? ’ I answered by immediately putting the helm over.

‘ Steady ! ’ shouted Tom. I whirled the little wheel back and kept the brig’s head straight at about two points off the course we had been pursuing.

‘ Take the wheel, Johnstone,’ Tom cried, ‘ and keep your ears open, my lad.’

I surrendered the spokes to my cousin and mounted the steps with eagerness and expectation ; I had caught a note of excitement in my sweetheart’s voice. The shift of helm had brought the wind almost directly over the stern of the brig ; I looked along the white line of her wake, thinking to see the ship at the extremity of it, but, beholding nothing, I asked Mr. Bates where the sail was. He pointed over the lee quarter, and there to be sure hung a big dim cloud of canvas.

The moon was low and without power ; the stars had grown wan since midnight, as though to the approach of dawn or as if to a gathering of windy thickness ; the ship astern

was visible by a kind of light of her own in her canvas—she showed as an iceberg might by night, or a tall snow-covered hill. I stood near Tom, the mate joined us, and we watched the white shadow growing out of the gloom.

Our change, of course, so postured the stranger that in a manner of speaking she was crossing our stern, so that she'd pass on our weather quarter close to.

‘I believe it's she—I believe it's she!’ Tom muttered, speaking to himself.

Nothing was said for some time. The foam broke from under our counter in a trail of light like the glittering scar left by a meteor in the sky. We were washing through it at seven knots, and the great dim cloud of canvas astern at eleven or twelve. She had now shaped herself into a clear outline against the thin stars, and I could see the white water boiling at her forefoot.

‘Captain Butler,’ exclaimed the mate, in a voice of agitation, ‘that's the *Childe Harold*!’

‘Yes! She's the convict ship,’ said Tom, catching me by the hand. ‘Do you see that

her main-royal lies furled? Whither away? Whither away?' cried he, looking at the ship.

'Fore and main topmast stu'n'sails!' exclaimed Mr. Bates. His voice quivered, now he recognised the ship he was first officer of but a little while gone.

She loomed up upon our quarter in a thunderous heap of pallid flying shadow, and the low red western moon and the lean stars and the throb of black waters, flashful with foam, ridging southwards, were the fittest setting the night could have contrived for her; and that deep spirit of desolation which in the dark hours of the ocean morning spreads out of the gloomy distance was present and abounding. She showed no light, but the foam which broke in masses from her bows and fled along her sides swift as smoke touched the fabric of the noble ship's hull with its own radiance, and we viewed her as though by moonlight.

She was about a quarter of a mile distant when she swept past us. All that way off I heard the drum-like roll of the wind in the

high white spaces of her canvas, and the sullen, continuous roar of the water she parted. And all the time she hung to windward, drawing ahead and opening out the squares of her sails till their hollows, blackening upon us, showed like a growing thunderstorm upon the sea-line, but with never a wink of light from cabin window or binnacle-stand. Tom and the mate commented upon her; my sweetheart in a rapid, fierce voice; Bates sulkily.

Tom said: 'The devil's in command there, and he has stocked her forecastle with a troop of devils.'

'They'll be no worse than their ship-mates,' said the mate.

'How they're driving her! Our escape has woke them up! There's fear and there's meaning, too, in that press. Where are they bound to, and who's to carry them there? Are they lying drenched and drugged and damned again as last night, thick as poisoned rats one atop of another? Oh, the beasts!'

'I guess what's happened,' said the mate, in a gloomy voice. 'That chap with a cast

eye, who put the scheme of the Pacific Islands into their heads, has taken charge of the ship. There's a sailor's hand in that spread of cloths. Butler, they'll know where they started, from what you told them; that cast-eyed rogue'll heave the log and plump foul of what's nearest and split. Lord, what a beautiful ship to run away with! And they'll lose her, they'll lose her!'

'They're steering straight for Tristan d'Acunha,' said I.

'Aye, straight as a fly crawls up a pane of window!' exclaimed Tom. 'She'll make no Tristan. They'll head off for the Horn, and continue their navigation with a chart they can't read and a dirty forefinger.'

'If Barney Abram but knew we were in this brig!' I exclaimed.

Tom left the top of the deck-house and let go the maintopsail halliards. The big sail bellied out from the yard on the cap, losing its driving power, and in a few moments the brig's pace sensibly diminished.

'Let her get out of sight,' said he, returning. 'There's no horizon wide enough to

divide us. Why, Bates, think of daylight coming along and a stark calm falling, and yonder ship of devils, with Nick at the helm and Barney at the prow, lying stagnant within an easy boat-row!’

‘Here’s a wind to blow her clear of us, sir,’ said the mate.

They continued to talk; I, with my eyes fastened upon the fading shadow, sank into deep thought. Was that ship out there the vessel Tom and I and Will had boarded in the East India Docks? Was she the craft into whose black-hole under the forecastle I had crept, when all was silent in her prison ’tween-decks, while she lay at rest alongside the *Warrior* hulk? Was she the theatre of the tragedy of the convicts’ uprisal, of their nightmare carousals? Was it yonder shadow fast blending with the gloom upon the waters, whose fabric had re-echoed the obscene songs, the blasphemous jokes, the insane yells of the self-freed felons?

No more for a time than a wonderful horrible dream did it all seem to me as I stood looking—a frightful vision from which I must

awaken and find myself in my bed at home, starting up to grieve and yearn for Tom as of old, and saying to myself: This dream came to me by thinking, before I fell asleep, of what his life would be on board the convict ship and how I was to make sure of joining him in the country he was transported to.

The shadow vanished. It was the last we ever saw of the convict ship. It was the fittest of all disappearances for her. The folds of the morning darkness swallowed her up as though she had been thundered at headlong speed into the blackness of death's dominions, whose obscurity was thickened yet by the vapours of the inextinguishable fires.

I started, sighed, and passed my arm through Tom's.

At about eight o'clock this morning there was a lull in the wind; it then shifted suddenly into the south-east, blowing small at first, but freshening afterwards until it had settled into the steady pouring of the trade gale. I held the wheel while the three braced the yards forward, and soon the little brig was humming along on what sailors call a taut

bowline with her fore and main royals set, and as fair a prospect of fine weather to windward as ever the noble commercial breeze of the South Atlantic painted in clouds and dyes of clear pure blue.

This same morning, after breakfast, I still steering the little ship, Tom and the others overhauled the vessel afresh. They lifted the main hatch and took a look below. They entered the lazarette, searched the fore-peak, closely again examined the crew's sleeping-quarters. They met with everything essential in the equipment of a small brig—suits of sails, carpenter's tools, boatswain's stores in plenty. Indeed, Tom said she was the best found craft of her sort he had ever seen.

He found a brace of pistols and ammunition for them in the captain's cabin. There were no other small arms on board.

When the brig had been trimmed for the trade wind, they went to work to chock and secure the *Childe Harold's* quarter-boat in the place where the brig's long-boat had stood; afterward, Will mixed a pot of paint and painted out the name '*Childe Harold*, London,'

in the stern of the boat. Mr. Bates then carefully gauged the stock of fresh water and found a handsome supply, sweet and good.

And now, till we made the island of Tristan d'Acunha, there befell nothing worthy to detain you. We found no difficulty in managing the brig. Larger ships than the *Old Stormy* had been handled and safely worked across the wildest and widest breasts of ocean in the world by crews at least as small as ours. My share consisted in cooking, preparing the cabin table for meals, steering when my watch came round and when Tom was weary of standing at the wheel or wished to get upon the deck-house top to look about.

Both Will and Bates fell very quiet. They read Tom's resolution in his face and they heard it in his voice, and they came into his scheme of touching at Tristan as though they themselves had been escaped convicts eager to hide.

Many a long talk did I have with Tom over his project, and I know that I never breathed a syllable in opposition to his wishes. Particularly do I recall a conversation we held

one night in the first watch ; he steered, and I, who was tired, sat on a chair close beside him. The trade wind sang shrill betwixt our leaning masts ; regularly as the beat of a clock the brig heeled to the slant of the windward surge and bowed her lee side till the froth spat and snored along the very line of her bulwark rail.

‘No, Tom,’ said I, answering him ; ‘don’t call it banishment. Banishment for me must be where you are not.’

‘I’ve tried, for your sake,’ said he, ‘to think of another and a better plan, but Tristan in my mind for ever stands steadily best and first. Let Bates and Will believe we mean to settle there. Our imprisonment shall be just as short or long as we choose.’

‘We can leave when we please?’

‘Whalers are constantly calling at the island ; they fish in many seas, and they’ll give us a wide choice of retreats.’

‘Yet I wish Corporal Glass didn’t know you.’

‘Why? By knowing me he’ll the more readily believe in my story. What have I to

dread? Suppose news reaches the island of the seizure of the *Childe Harold*, would Glass and the few simple families of the place imagine me a convict? Not surely in the face of the story I must relate, Marian.'

'When the news gets home they may send men-of-war to search for the convict ship.'

'My dear, I am a sailor first of all; put it thus: The *Childe Harold* will be fallen in with; no need to search for her in that case. Or she may founder. Never imagine that of so great a company every soul will perish; she has boats, but a single survivor would suffice to acquaint them at home with her fate. And how must the yarn run as regards myself? The convict who took command got away in a boat. What became of him? Let them find out.'

He cried out vehemently after he had said this, 'Oh, my own, that I should be forced to hide! But it has come to it. You are with me and of me, Marian; but what sort of future lies before you?'

I arose and kissed him, and, with my arm about his neck, held my cheek pressed to his.

He calmed down quickly, and I got him to talk to me about the island. He told me that when the British troops landed in 1816, the only person on Tristan was an Italian. He was in possession of a large sum of money ; but they never succeeded in finding out who he was, how he came by the money, or what had become of his companions. Tom said that the idea of seeking a refuge in that island had occurred to him in the time when the convicts were planning the seizure of the ship. His long chat with Corporal Glass on the occasion of his visit a few years before occurred to him, and he remembered many things that he had seen and heard, such as the little group of cottages situated on the tabled tongue of land, the scanty stock of domestic furniture and utensils, the abundance of English farm-produce, bread, bacon, eggs, butter, milk, poultry, and the like. For groceries and clothes, he said, the families depended on a passing emigrant ship or American whaler. They used no money. Ships were glad to exchange what the islanders wanted for potatoes and such fresh provisions as the

island yielded. This is what I can recollect of what Tom told me of that island.

The days passed quickly; the work of the brig kept our hands full, and when, of an evening, I looked back on the hours, I'd marvel at the swiftness of their flight. The south-east trades failed us; we then took a strong wind out of the west, which drove us along with the speed of steam. There was small doubt now of our making the island within the fortnight, computing from the day when we fell in with the brig. At long intervals a sail hove into view, but we never sighted anything within speaking distance, nor would Tom have had anything to say to a ship, though she had come close enough to be within hail of the voice.

It was Sunday morning. I was aroused by Will, who beat upon my cabin door. He asked me if I was awake. I answered, 'You may hear me.'

'Then,' said he, 'step out and take a look at the island Butler's to make you queen of, for I'll be hanged if the heap of cinder isn't right over the bows.'

I clothed myself in a breathless hurry, and, coming out, found Mr. Bates at the wheel and Will on the bulwarks, looking ahead, and Tom on the deck-house roof, pointing the brig's telescope at the sea. The morning was bright and silent. A light north-easterly wind held the canvas hushed. Long lines of swell were flowing out of the south-east. For leagues northward and eastward the sea was full of the light of the sun.

I looked directly ahead, and instantly beheld a large, dim, violet cloud upon the horizon.

‘Is that Tristan d’Acunha, Tom?’

‘Yes!’ he exclaimed, turning quickly.

‘That’s our island, Marian.’

‘A noble hiding-place!’ I cried.

Indeed, that point of shadowy land lying upon the mighty face of the deep was such a revelation of loneliness that, when you viewed it and thought of the measureless leagues of ocean stretching from it west to the South Pacific, east to the Australian meridians, you thought that here only in this prodigious liquid waste was earth’s

deepest, wildest, most awful secret of solitude to be learned and solved.

Tom's eyes were upon me. He brought his face close and whispered, 'They'll never think of us as being there.'

'It's as lonely as a star.'

'We'll be getting a better view presently. I hope there's nothing lying off. If there is, I'll push on and heave to behind the horizon till I think it's gone.'

'Is there a harbour, Tom?'

'Oh, no,' he replied, with a shake of his head and a faint smile. 'No other harbour than a two-mile offing. That heap is about eight thousand feet tall. You see but a little of it. The mass from midway'll be wrapped up in a cloud. The inshore wind strikes and rebounds in offshore gales. I'll not leave the brig. They'll put off, and if they'll lend me two or three hands to work us, then, after I've introduced Glass to you, if he's well enough to board us—and spun my yarn to him with you as the only listener'—and here he glanced at Will, who still overhung the rail, looking ahead—'we'll proceed'

I did not ask where to ; we had talked the thing over and over again, and the four of us were agreed that nothing could be settled till we were off the island and saw how affairs stood there. It was just possible that a missionary parson had settled in Tristan since Tom's visit ; in that case we could be made man and wife out of hand and so spared a new voyage in search of a church. Then, again, nothing could be decided until we knew that the islanders would lend us two or three of themselves to help work the brig.

The wind scanted as the day advanced, and we were further hindered by a heavy, long-drawn swell off the port bow. There was no chance of our reaching the island before dark within communicating distance. At sunset the huge mass of towering rock was about two leagues away, and even then a most wonderful sublime sight. Bodies of orange-coloured mist clung to the mountain, whose snow-crowned peak, piercing the sun-touched vapour, gleamed in a soft rose in the delicate evening blue. We saw no vessel under the island or upon the sea-line. The

lofty land swiftly darkened into the liquid dusk when the sun sank, and over it, where it stood invisible, hung the stars of the Southern Cross.

The cabin barometer promised fair weather; the brig flapped onward through the darkness, bowing deeply to the swell; but somewhere between eight and nine, Tom considering we should need the offing we then had, the three backed the yards on the main, and the vessel was brought to a stand. The lighter sails were clewed up and furled, and the mainsail snugged by its gear.

Whilst Tom and the others were aloft and I was at the wheel, I heard a strange hissing noise close to. It was like a locomotive blowing off steam. The rolling of the brig depressed the bulwarks and gave me a sight of the sea, and I spied, at the distance of a pistol-shot, the great black body of a whale, with a jet of water, bright with phosphorus, sparkling plume-shaped out of it. Tom from aloft called down to me to look, but the monster sank almost immediately, and if it reappeared I neither heard nor saw it.

This trifling incident somehow wonderfully accentuated the vastness and solitude of the ocean to the mood that was then upon me. I strained my eyes in the direction where I guessed the island to be and pictured myself upon it, gazing upon the dark plain of the deep, sensible that, saving two adjacent rocks, no land was to be come at for hundreds and hundreds of leagues. The shadow of the mighty ocean mountain was upon my spirits, not in a depressing or a despondent weight, but with an influence that subdued and awed me. I thought of that part of London in which I had dwelt, the streets filled with the noise of people in motion, the lighted shops, the ceaseless rattle of wheels, the docks complicated as a giant cobweb with rigging and masts pointing in silence into the gloomy river sky, the flash of lanterns on the water, the starry lines of lamps on either bankside, of my house at Stepney; and I beheld my father and mother again with my mind's eye, and Mr. Stanford's strange, sickly child; my unloved dead sister; I thought of my aunt's cheerful house near the Tower, the pleasant,

hospitable rooms above the offices, the piano at which I had sung, the supper-table round which we had gathered ; and then I searched the dark distance for the shadow whereon I was to dwell, and said to myself, if there should be a clergyman there, by this time to-morrow I may be Tom's wife.

I shivered and pressed my head. A sense of the unreality of my existence came upon me ; it was a sort of madness whilst it lasted.

Tom had descended the rigging and came to my side, and, unable to control myself, I threw my arms round his neck and burst into tears.

He held me to him and called to Will, who had just sprung from the bulwarks, to take the helm, and led me into the deck-house and seated me.

‘ What is it, Marian ? ’

He eyed me anxiously, his face almost stern with gloomy apprehension as he asked the question.

‘ We have gone through so much, Tom, and the end is at hand. Let me cry ; ’ and I hid my face and wept again.

He held his peace till I looked at him, and then said, 'Marian, it's not too late.'

'What is not too late?'

'Bates and Will will take care that you reach home safely.'

'Oh, Tom, it's not in your heart. You don't mean it.'

'Marian, my love for you makes me feel a villain for permitting you to have your way. Why did you cry?'

'Because I was afraid.'

'Afraid! Oh, yes! Such a home even for a year, even for a month, might terrify a stouter heart than yours into more than tears.'

'I was afraid because I thought to myself, standing alone just now and recalling the past and looking into the darkness where the island lies, all this must be a dream—I shall awaken from it and find Tom a prisoner and away from me, and my heart aching for him.'

He viewed me with impassioned earnestness; his face lighted up; he smiled with one of those looks which brought him before me in the days of his glowing, manly beauty,

when I had first met him, when calamity was still afar and all was well.

‘Dearest!’ he said, and coming to me he tenderly rested my head upon his shoulder; and thus we sat with our hearts too full for speech.

The brig being hove to, the helm needed but little or no attention. The wheel was secured, and the vessel lay in the hollow of the large, wide swell, rolling as regularly as the breast rises and falls in sleep. It was decided that the three should divide the watches, one keeping a look-out at a time and the others lying near, handy to arouse. Tom told me to rest throughout the night, and I obeyed him; but my rest was very broken, and when I slumbered I dreamed strangely.

CHAPTER XLII

SHE MEETS THE TRISTAN ISLANDERS

I WAS awakened shortly after daybreak by Tom. He called to me that it was a fine morning, with a pleasant air of wind, and that I was wanted at the wheel whilst he and the others trimmed sail. I passed through the cabin-door to the wheel, and found the morning fair and bright indeed, the air delicate and soft as a tender day in May at home ; the wind was north, blowing directly for the island, which, when I went on deck, was off the starboard beam, a giant lump of land, truly, and more imposing than Teneriffe, as I have heard sailors say, because of its colour and loneliness, though the mighty Canary peak soars to nearly double Tristan's altitude.

It stood at a distance of seven or eight miles. The upper half of the mountain was

clothed in motionless lines or wreaths of steam-white cloud, but the snow-clad summit sparkled in the early sunshine and looked like the moon, but more brilliant, soaring out of vapour. The base was of a dark and sullen hue.

Will loosed the lighter sails, the yards were squared, and the brig floated slowly toward the island. I saw no ship, and was mightily thankful. We got breakfast; and when that meal was ended, Tom bid me prepare the table for company; he said some of the islanders would come aboard when we hove to again, and must be hospitably welcomed. I made the best show to be contrived out of the brig's larder, and put some of the *Old Stormy's* wine on the swing trays. Whilst this was doing, Tom went into his cabin and carefully shaved and dressed himself. They had found clothes belonging to the murdered master and mate of the brig, and neither Tom nor Bates had scrupled to wear them.

When my sweetheart stepped out, he was more like his old self in appearance than I

had seen him for many a long day. He wore blue cloth trousers and waistcoat, and the round jacket that had come from the *Childe Harold's* slop-chest; the collar of his sailor shirt lay open and exposed his finely shaped throat above the black silk handkerchief carelessly tied there. He had found and put on a sealskin cap, which suited him admirably well.

‘This is a good, hospitable spread,’ said he, looking at the table. ‘This will warm the cockles of the corporal’s heart. The poor fellows are not always dealt with as though they came off hungry—at least by French and Yankee whalers.’

He took up the brig’s glass, and I followed him to the top of the house, wishing Will good morning with a kiss of my hand as I passed him at the wheel. Bates, on top of the house, stood soberly surveying the island. He said to Tom: ‘The yarn’s to be left to you, I take it, Butler, and my part’s to nod?’

‘That’s it,’ said Tom.

He pointed the glass and carefully swept

the island and the sea on either hand of it, then bade me look. The huge volcanic rock was now between three and four miles off. The base was of perpendicular cliffs of lava, about fifty feet high. Beyond was a level strip of land, backed by the mountain, which rose abruptly to about four thousand feet, then shelved peakwise to its star-searching height. The swell burst against the iron foot of the island and boiled in a wool-white line. Thick heaps of white cloud clung to the towering eminence, but the summit remained visible, a delicate white, glittering like a sugar-loaf in the rich morning blue.

‘D’ye see the houses, Marian?’ said Tom. ‘Look away to the left, low down.’

I pointed the telescope, and presently saw a number of little cottages, situated on the north extreme of the long level strip of land. I did not quickly distinguish the buildings. They were of the colour of the mass of rock, and mingled with the background.

You’ll suppose I gazed with passionate interest. There before me, large in the lenses of the telescope, lay my new home. I won-

dered which of the cottages might fall to Tom and me—whether we should have to build for ourselves. How was life spent upon that island? How did the slender community occupy and amuse themselves? Tom had talked to me of farming, seal-hunting, fishing, cultivating fruit-trees in the sunny and sleepy hollows of the several little craters. But surely the days were peaceful and to be happily spent; and if that lovely island did but give Tom the safety and heart-ease I prayed for, I'd be willing to pass my whole life upon it, and share a grave in it with my dear one.

Thus ran my thoughts whilst I looked. I put the telescope in Tom's hand again; he eyed me inquiringly and anxiously. I answered his look by saying, 'It is beautiful and calm and grand; I can imagine no spot I would choose before it.'

When we were come within two miles of the shore, the brig's topsail was backed and her light sails furled; by the time this was done I, who had secured the helm and gone to the deck-house top to take another view of the lava-coloured swelling places, spied a

white boat making for us; by help of the glass I counted four men in her. She came along quickly. We went to the gangway to receive the boat, and Will stood by with a line.

Tom, looking through the telescope, exclaimed, 'The corporal's not one of them! I believe I recollect the stroke oar—it's Peter Green, a Dutchman.'

'The corporal may be dead,' said I.

'It will not matter,' he answered.

The white whale-boat swept alongside; the coil of line flung by Will was caught; three of the fellows scrambled aboard by way of the main chains, and the fourth followed quickly after thrusting the boat, secured by the line, clear of the brig. Three of them were elderly men, and one middle-aged; they were dressed in large grass hats, blue jackets, and two of them in trousers of a fearnought. Tom stepped up to the man that had pulled stroke, and, giving his hand, said:

'You're Peter Green. Do you remember me?'

The fellow had an old homely Dutch face,

withered by the wear of weather, the smallest eyes I ever saw in a man, lodged deep in mere gimlet-holes under the grey and white of his shaggy brows. I was pleased, however, by his look of simple kindness and good-nature. He stared with a wrinkled, smiling face at Tom, and said, 'Yaw, we hov met; vhas it on dot island?'

Tom named the date of his visit, the ship, and was recalling one or two incidents, when Peter Green again shook hands: 'To be sure! I remembers you now. And how vhas you, sir, after all dis time?' and he cast his little eyes around the decks as though in search of the crew. 'Dis vhas your lady, I expect?' said he, looking at me and touching his hat.

Tom slightly inclined his head and said: 'This is Mr. Bates, chief mate, and yonder young gentleman, Mr. Johnstone, this lady's cousin.'

'Und dese,' said Peter Green, waving his hand toward his three mates, who stood near him, 'vhas my goodt neighbours and friendts—Mr. Alexander Cotton, dot vhas long in your Royal Navy; Mr. Andrew Hagan, dot

hails from Boston ; and Mr. William Daly, doth vhas likewise of your navy.'

Each man, as his name was pronounced, saluted with a deep sea bow. I regarded them earnestly ; they were to be neighbours of mine soon. What was the colour of their wives, and how many children had they ?

'You're in time for dinner,' said Tom. 'Step into the cabin, will you ? Johnstone, my lad, give an eye to the brig whilst I entertain our friends here.'

We entered the deck-house in a body.

'Bit short-handed, capt'n, ain't ye ?' said old Cotton, gazing about him with slow motions of the head.

'We'll come to that soon,' said Tom. 'Friends, seat yourselves and fall to. Marian, there's a chair for you next Peter Green. Bates, I'll trouble you to uncork some of that wine on the swing trays.'

My presence seemed to embarrass the poor islanders ; they did not speak whilst their plates were being heaped. They eyed me shyly and would not eat after they had been served.

‘This is good ham—this is middling beef, Mr. Green,’ said Tom. ‘It’s the best welcome our little ship will allow us to give you.’

Peter Green bowed his head with the courteous gesture of a fine old gentleman, and then, observing that everybody was served, he stood up and, with a countenance of great devotion, said grace. The others hung their heads in a posture of prayer. Mr. Bates was greatly impressed; Tom and I exchanged looks—I saw that he was well pleased that I should have witnessed so soon this little illustration of the islanders’ habits. Grace said, the three old fellows and the others ate heartily, and conversation then flowed.

‘How is Corporal Glass?’ asked Tom.

‘He vhas not very well to-day,’ answered Peter Green. ‘Dot cancer troubles him. But I tell him he vhas goodt for many years.’

‘Please God!’ said William Daly.

‘Anything called off you lately?’ said Tom.

‘Nothing for five weeks,’ answered Hagan,

with a nasal accent, 'and she was a French whaler.'

'Got a clergyman yet?'

'Nein,' answered Peter Green. 'Der governor wrote by a South-Seaman to der Bishop of Cape Town. Der vhas no reply yet.'

'Parsons ain't penguins,' said Cotton. 'I tell 'ee, captain, the clergyman as comes to live amongst us 'll be a-dedicating of his life to his Maker, arter a fashion you may overhaul the lot of your parishes at home afore finding the like of.'

'Are there many young children among you, Mr. Green?' said I.

'Why, yaw, considering, marm. Dere vhas t'ree generations of us;' and he named the number of children.

'Don't time hang a little heavily with you?' said Mr. Bates.

'Well, we gets up early and we turns in early,' answered Daly, 'and what's between somehow seems to slide out unbeknown. We turns a day up as you turns a sandglass up, and the stuff runs so fast and sly that it

always seems to be time to go to bed or time to be getting up.'

'It vhas eighteen hoondred and twenty-four dot Corporal Glass vhas governor,' said Peter Green. 'Dot vhas joost fourteen years; und a leetle while ago, when we keep his birthday, he vhas saying it vhas all der same as fourteen days, so queek vhas time.'

'Any of you left lately?' said Mr. Bates.

'Two men took on home-sick last year,' answered Hagan.

'How's the school getting on?' inquired Tom.

'Foorst class,' answered Green. 'But I tell you vhat ve wants. Ve want more young men. Dere vhas too many fimmen.'

'Too many of either will eat you up!' exclaimed Tom. 'When I was last here, Glass told me that the island could never be got to support more than two hundred people.'

'Vell, dot vhas right.'

'Will the corporal be able to come aboard? I want to see him.'

'Not to-day, I expect,' said the grey-

haired old man-of-war's man named Daly. 'That there lip of his is a-worriting him. We'll put ye ashore, capt'n. The governor'll be glad to welcome ye.'

'We're well off for potatoes,' said Hagan, 'and there are a few stones of prime beef at your sarvice. Goats grow scarce. Water-casks want filling?'

'Why, perhaps. I must see to it,' said Tom.

'Vhat might der be in your holdt to barter mit?' asked Peter Green.

'Much that'll prove useful to the island,' said Tom; 'and that's one of the matters I wish to see Governor Glass about.'

'Come ashore with us, capt'n,' said the Dutchman.

'I can't leave the brig,' answered Tom. 'We're short-handed.'

'So! I vash vondering where der crew vhas.'

'Gone dead?' inquired Hagan.

'No. They took the boat and ran from the brig in mid-ocean. There were five of them and a cook. The beauties left a note

behind them to let us know what had become of them, that we shouldn't feel uneasy. Mr. Peter Green, your British merchant seaman slowly and steadily improves, morally and intellectually. He has hauled down his bloody flag and chucked his blunderbuss to the mermaids, and now ships as a respectable man under a house flag and is rarely guilty of worse crimes than swearing away his captain's liberty and life, or slitting a wind-pipe in the middle watch and making off in the ship's quarter-boat.'

'I do not exactly understand you, sir,' said Peter Green, who had sat straining his withered, good-natured Dutch face to catch Tom's meaning, his few black fangs of teeth slowly masticating the while, as though he chewed the cud.

'There ha'n't been no blood shed, I hope?' said the old fellow Cotton.

'The foremost crew of the brig consisted of five seamen and a cook,' said Tom. 'They said that stuff there,' and here he pointed to a piece of salt beef, 'wasn't sweet enough for such choice gums as theirs, so they stole the

boat and made off—a new way of running from a ship, Mr. Cotton, eh?’—the old man-of-war’s man gravely inclined his wrinkled face—‘and left us too short-handed to enable me to go ashore with you now and visit Governor Glass. But he’ll come aboard, I hope?’

‘Where vhas you from, capt’n?’ inquired Peter Green.

‘The brig’s from the Mersey.’

‘How’s the Mersey a-looking?’ exclaimed Daly, with an expression of eagerness in his old eyes.

Peter Green thrust in again. ‘Where vhas you bound?’

‘The cargo’s consigned to Cape Town.’

‘Dis vhas a leedle out of your road.’

‘Why, yes. But I’ve called to see Corporal Glass.’

‘Dere vhas t’reë shipwreckt men on der island,’ said Peter Green, ‘dot ve vhas glad to get rid of, und dot vhas very thankful to ship mit you.’

‘Call ’em two,’ said Hagan; ‘the sick man’s no use.’

‘Dot vhas a very bad look-out for der ship und her people!’ exclaimed Peter Green, whose glass I had filled with wine. ‘Tell der story, Mr. Hagan.’

‘Why,’ said Hagan, speaking through his nose, ‘it was like this: I had stepped out of my cottage just as day was a-breaking to take a look ’round; away out nor’-west I see something black—just a black speck. Wal, I borrows the governor’s glass and makes out a ship’s boat, with an oar stepped and something white flying from the head of it. Three of our people, Miller, Riley, and Swain, agree with me to go and have a look at the boat. So we launches, and what do we find? A boat with four men in her; one man dead, another seemingly dying, t’other two too weak to sit up. We got ’em ashore, buried the body, and brought the others to. Him that seemed dying is a bit better, but he looks queer, and, to my mind, ain’t a-going to last. He hurt himself somewheres insides when the scramble happened in the fire. The other two are all right, and all three want to get away.’

‘Survivors of a fire, I take it?’ said, Tom.

‘Yaw,’ answered Green.

‘Smart little barque,’ said Hagan; ‘burned to the water’s edge. The people got away in two boats. Them that’s ashore is the skipper and mate and an able seaman.’

‘Who’s the sick man?’ said Mr. Bates.

‘Der mate,’ answered Peter Green.

‘How long have they been with you?’ I asked.

‘T’ree weeks, marm. Captain,’ exclaimed the Dutchman, turning to Tom, ‘did you know the leedle ship? She vhas called—she vhas called—ach, my memory!’

‘The *Arab Chief*,’ said Hagan.

‘The *Arab Chief*!’ exclaimed Tom, speaking slowly.

‘Did you know her, sir?’ asked Peter Green.

‘A fine clipper barque of six hundred and thirty tons,’ said Tom, speaking deliberately, with so sudden a change of voice that the islanders looked hard at him.

‘That’s the vessel,’ exclaimed Hagan.

‘You have her master and his mate on the island?’

‘Aye,’ replied Green.

‘Bates, hand me that bottle,’ said Tom. He poured out a quarter of a tumblerful of rum, mixed a little water with it, and swallowed the draught. ‘Do you know the names of the master and mate?’ he inquired, after a pause.

‘Very vell indeed, if dey vhas not pursers’ names,’ answered Green. ‘Von vhas Captain Samuel Rotch. Der odder vhas Meester Nodder. Der man vhas John Collins.’

‘I’ll return in a minute. I must look to the brig,’ said Tom, and walked out of the deck-house.

I was thunderstruck. I could not credit my senses. I looked at Mr. Bates, who looked at me, and I felt my face as white as the cloth upon the table. Rotch and Nodder on that island! The two fiends who had sworn away Tom’s liberty, made a felon of him, ruined, degraded, shipwrecked his life, forcing him down here to hide his guiltless head in

the shadow and solitude of the towering ocean mountain upon whose shore calamity had cast them—those two incarnate devils within reach of an easy boat's row, and themselves willing to ship in the brig and sail away in her! I thought my heart had stopped breathing. I could scarcely fetch a breath.

Peter Green looked hard at me and said: 'Poor lady, I hope you did not feel ill, marm?'

'Take no notice of the lady,' said Mr. Bates. 'These attacks are passing, and due to the heavy rolling. Drink a little wine,' said he. He passed me a small glassful. He then added: 'The fresh air will revive you; I recommend you to join the captain on deck.'

I rose, and so did Peter Green, and offered me his hand as though to conduct me. I had now my voice, and, forcing a smile, begged him to keep his seat, and went slowly to the door. I found Will standing near the wheel, which was secured, and said to the lad: 'Go in and get your dinner and hear the wonder-

ful news. But say nothing. Be satisfied to listen, and answer no questions, lest the villains ashore get scent of us, and keep themselves out of Tom's power.'

He gazed at me as though he believed me mad. I advanced a little way along the deck, so as to command a view of the top of the house. Up there stood Tom, grasping the brass rail, motionless, just as I recollected his figure once in the convict ship, his eyes rooted on the island. He was bare-headed. I re-entered the cabin for his cap, which lay on the deck beside his chair, and then went up the ladder. My sweetheart took the cap and put it on. The motions of his arms and head were mechanical, as though he had been mesmerised and moved only when commanded, but never before had I seen on his face the expression it now wore. It was a look of fierce, savage delight ; his whole countenance was dark with a scowl, in which lurked a faint, terrible smile. But how is my weak tongue to express the outward aspect of his mood then ? I dared not speak to him till he had addressed me. He turned his eyes pre-

sently from the island and said, with a voice and manner as fierce as his face :

‘What do you think of this? There is a God and there is a devil, and God always wins.’

‘Are they your men?’

‘Rotch and Nodder! Rotch and Nodder! The one the captain, the other mate of the *Arab Chief*! My men? What other man’s if not mine?’

‘Tom, you look mad. I feel as you do, but this is a moment for passionless thought. The islanders will be coming on deck in a moment or two; they’ll carry the story of your sudden strange agitation ashore. Rotch, if Rotch it be, may ask questions, get your description, and stop where he is. Do you mean that to happen?’ cried I; and when I had said this I felt the blood mount like fire to my face. I stretched out my hands toward the island, and in the fit of uncontrollable wrath that possessed me motioned like a mad woman, as though I beheld an apparition which my delirium compelled me to seize and drag. Again I could hardly breathe; and

though my heart was bursting to counsel him, I could not utter a word. The sight of me in this state did him good; I mean it made him see the folly and uselessness of wild temper and raging words at such a time.

‘Yours is the passion, not mine,’ said he. ‘I have made up my mind. I know exactly what to do. I am glad to have you here to speak to. Words give relief—a little relief.’ And, clasping my arm, he led me to the extremity of the deck-house.

‘It’s too swift, startling, wonderful to bear!’ I cried, squeezing my brows to ease the vile ache of throbbing there. ‘What do you mean to do?’

‘Bring them into this brig and keep them in her till they confess, though I should have to sail about the world with them till the vessel goes to pieces,’ he answered.

‘Then you won’t settle upon that island?’

‘Not now—not yet awhile, not until I have received Messieurs Rotch and Nodder on board and dealt with them.’ He added: ‘I want time to think. My brain’s in a whirl.

If Rotch hears that I'm the man who has charge of this brig, he'll not come.'

'Peter Green knows your name.'

'I believe not. He has not called me by my name. Did he ask it below?'

'Not in my hearing.'

'Butler is no uncommon name, and I'm changed—too changed to be recognised by the scoundrel in any description of me Peter Green is capable of.'

'But Corporal Glass may recollect you, Tom, and name the ship you arrived off the island in.'

'That won't help Rotch. He wouldn't identify me as his man by hearing the name of a ship he's not likely to have heard I sailed in.' He looked at the island, and cried: 'My scheme is wholly changed. But I have not yet formed a resolution. We'll talk it over when the islanders are gone. Bates shall counsel me as well as you. Let me but get hold of them here, and by my heavenly Maker, Marian, they shall swing if they don't sign a confession of my innocence.'

'Tom, be calm now, dear. The islanders

are leaving the cabin. Keep your feelings under. They stared at you at table. Here now may be God's own gift of a chance to establish your innocence. Don't risk it, don't spoil it, by want of self-control.'

'See to yourself,' said he, almost smiling. And as he spoke these words the head of Peter Green showed above the top of the ladder. The four islanders, accompanied by Mr. Bates, came on to the deck-house roof.

'Vell, und how vhas you now, marm?' said the Dutchman.

I answered that the fresh air had made me feel well again.

'Und you, captain? Vhat vhas your hurry? Vhas you afraid of der vetter? Der vetter vhas all right.'

'Had any rollers here lately, Mr. Green?' said Tom, in his ordinary voice.

'I think dere vhas no rollers,' answered the Dutchman, 'since six weeks.'

'You're in for a spell of quiet weather, captain,' said old Cotton. 'We're obliged to you for a first-rate blow-out. Dunno how it is; there's a sweetness in wittles at sea

which my old teeth never can find in grub ashore.'

Hagan, who had stepped to the end of the deck-house to see if the whale-boat rode safely, now joined us and exclaimed: 'If you'd care to go ashore, capt'n, I'll remain in the brig in your place.'

'No, I won't go ashore; it isn't as though I hadn't visited your island. Perhaps you'll bring Glass off to-morrow.'

'What vhas your name again, captain?' said Green. 'Dot I may tell der governor when he asks who vhas his old friend in der brig.'

'Don't you tell him,' exclaimed Tom, with a loud, forced, unnatural laugh. 'There is sometimes pleasure to be got out of surprise, Mr. Green. Besides, curiosity may coax him into paying me a visit; name me, and the corporal will say, "Oh yes, I remember," and stop ashore. I propose this,' he continued, speaking rapidly as though to overwhelm immediate thought in his hearers by crowding new ideas upon them. 'First, what can you let us have?'

Old Daly answered that they could supply the brig with a small quantity of fresh beef, plenty of potatoes, a little fruit, eggs, poultry, and goats' flesh.

'We shall want to fill our water-casks. Will the islanders do that for us if we send that boat?' said Tom, pointing to the *Childe Harold's* quarter-boat chocked in room of the brig's long-boat.

'Oh yes; that shall be done,' said old Cotton.

'We'll take all you can let us have,' continued Tom. 'And, by way of exchange—Mr. Bates, be good enough to carry our friends into the hold and break out some cases of wearing apparel. They shall value the stuff for themselves.'

'At once, sir?' said Mr. Bates.

'At once,' responded Tom, stepping to the skylight to look at the time. 'It's a quarter to three. I shall want a wider offing for the night, and don't want to tow that boat out to sea.'

The mate and the islanders went away in a body. Tom began to pace the deck, often

gazing at the island, his brows knitted, his face very fierce and dark. I guessed by his looks he wished to be alone, and quietly descended the ladder, at the foot of which stood Will smoking a pipe.

‘Marian,’ he cried, ‘this is an amazing thing to happen!’

‘Aye, but you mustn’t look amazed. We mean to get the wretches in our power. Sooner than come aboard they’d climb to the top of that island to escape Tom if they suspected who we were.’

‘What does Butler mean to do?’

‘I can’t tell you, because he doesn’t himself know.’

‘Bringing those fellows aboard doesn’t look like your settling on the island, does it?’

‘Tom won’t settle on that island now, not if two of the castaways there are Rotch and Nodder and we can tempt them into the brig.’

‘And a precious good job for you!’ exclaimed the lad, with his eyes fixed on the island. ‘Look at it! Imagine living out

your life there! You've dined with specimens of its male society. What are its ladies like? The worth of Butler's love for you has sunk hideously in my esteem ever since he planned such a rat-hole as that for you to live on merely because he's got to hide his head.'

'Hold your tongue!' I cried. 'Your esteem! What sort of tape do boys like you measure the love of such a man as Tom with?'

The dear fellow puffed at his pipe with a little temper, but, controlling himself, said: 'When the rogues come off they'll see Butler and shout to be set ashore again.'

'We are not fools,' said I; and my head beginning to ache again, and this sort of talk being profitless, I went into the deck-house cabin and sat down.

CHAPTER XLIII

SHE SEES CAPTAIN ROTCH AND MR. NODDER
AGAIN

MR. BATES and the others were a long time in the hold ; they found trouble in getting at the goods they wanted. I cleared the table and tidied the cabin, hot with thought all the time I worked. If Rotch and Nodder were truly on the island and we got them into the brig, how would this amazing venture end ?

Meanwhile I held off from Tom ; I heard him walking overhead ; the scheme he himself lighted on was sure to prove the best, and I guessed when he wanted me he would seek me.

At last Bates and the islanders came out of the hold. Tom descended the steps to talk with them, and I walked out to hear what passed.

‘ Captain,’ said Peter Green, ‘ ve vhas very

glad to exchange mit a leedle of what ve hov seen. Dere vhas some goodt useful shirts, und ve find der boots und flannel joost vat ve'll be thankful for in a month or two.'

'Very well,' said Tom, who now had himself wholly under control. 'The arrangements will stand thus, Mr. Green: I'll take a three-mile offing and heave to till daybreak. You'll then come off in your whale-boat with all you're able to load, and bring some hands to carry our boat ashore for fresh water. Is the hose still connected with the cascade?'

'Ay, sir,' said old Daly.

'Boats water lying outside the surf?'

'Dat vhas so,' said Peter Green.

'Well, when you've victualled and watered us, you'll bring off the three men who want to get away.'

'Where vhas you bound to again, captain?' said Peter Green. 'Ach, my memory!'

'To Cape Town,' answered Tom, quick in his answer as the report after the flash. 'Will that suit them?'

'Dey vhas very grateful. Und so vhas ve. Der language of dot Captain Rotch does not

always please Governor Glass. He vhas impatient, und vhas not enough thankful to Gott for his life. But, den, poor doyl, he has a wife und shilds at home, und den again he has lost his ship, mit a goodt deal of property for a hard-verking seafaring man.'

After a little more conversation to this effect the islanders got their boat alongside, shook hands with us all, and went away. It was hard upon five o'clock. All day long a light breeze had been blowing. Now and again the water crisped friskily close off the island, as though to a down-rush of cold breeze from the giant mountain slopes; but the spread of air was local, and no break of it came within a mile of the brig. The sky was pure, cloudless blue—the rich sky of the Antipodean summer; and the ocean, flowing stately in majestic folds of swell, was at this hour of a most lovely violet colour. The beautiful tint of sea and sky was in the atmosphere, and tinged the lofty mass of mountain to its snow-line. The vapour of the morning had dissolved upon that eminence. It now stood in naked, lovely grandeur. The wester-

ing sunshine flung a faint, delicate dye of rose upon the snow on its top, and the same fair tint lived in the line of foam that boiled the length of the whole base of the bit of solitary land. The white whale-boat making for the island showed like a melting snowflake, as she rose and sank upon the blue heave.

‘We’ll head out three miles, Bates,’ said Tom, ‘and then sit down and talk.’

The maintopsail was swung, and the brig’s jibbooms slowly rounded into the north. I went to the galley to see to the fire and boil water for tea. There was nothing in sight—no feather-tip of remote ship’s canvas—nothing but that mountain of Tristan d’Acunha, now darkening low down, then strangely glowing out in snow with gleams here and there as of waterfalls.

The helm was secured. The brig was under topsails and foresail only; small need for a constant look-out on such a bright, calm, sweet evening as this. We seated ourselves at the table, but neither Bates nor Will nor myself broke the silence till Tom spoke.

‘Some wonderful things have happened,’ said he, ‘since the convicts seized the ship, but nothing so wonderful as those men being on the island I meant to hide myself in.’

‘It’s God’s doing,’ said the mate.

Tom inclined his head.

‘There’s no doubt of their being the right men, d’ye think, sir?’ exclaimed Will.

‘The *Arab Chief*, my lad, and then Rotch and Nodder! Oh, no doubt, Johnstone.’

‘You’ll not take it amiss, Butler,’ said the mate, ‘if I ask what notions you’ve formed—what resolutions may have come into your head?’

‘First, as to receiving them on board,’ said Tom, speaking quietly and leisurely, though there was a look in his face which put an accent and meaning into his words that the ear with the eyes closed would not have caught. ‘I must be out of sight. Glass may come off. I’ll lie up in my cabin, and sham indisposition. Should Glass come, I’ll talk to him in my berth. You’ll receive the men and attend to all that needs looking after until the islanders go and sail’s trimmed. I’ll then

show myself.' He looked at me as he said this, and smiled.

'I quite understand,' said Mr. Bates. 'You can leave everything to me.'

'Bates, I would trust you with my life.' He paused, with his eyes fixed upon the mate. 'Afterward, you're thinking?' he continued. 'Well, that may be as it shall turn out; but I've sworn this by my heart, by that lady there, and by my Maker, that, having them, I'll not let go of them, Bates, till they've signed a declaration of my innocence and their own villainy, witnessed by all hands; that, having them,' he repeated, with the blood mounting into his face and his eyes glowing as though he were in a high fever, 'I'll keep them on the high seas to give them time to sign; failing which I'll hang them at the yardarms of this brig, though it should come to my going to the South Sea to find savages for their executioners.'

The fire, the passion, the intensity with which he spoke these words made his delivery tragically startling and impressive. Bates's countenance fell; Will was pale and alarmed;

my own spirit was in hot sympathy with Tom's—I felt all his rage, and his resolution to give the two devils the alternative of confessing the truth or of being hanged worked in me like a strong and flaming drink, and ran my blood in fire to my very finger-ends.

‘You’re never in earnest, Butler?’ said the mate in a low voice.

Tom scowled at him.

‘Why, man, consider ; put your respectability on one side and reflect. Those two fellows swore me into jail, into the hulk, into the convict ship, into long months of association with felons, whose crimes—many of them—barely stopped short of murder. It is to their training of me they’ll owe their hanging, if it comes to it. They’ve made a devil of me. They shall find me a devil.’

Mr. Bates glanced at me somewhat nervously and said : ‘Well, Butler, first let’s get them ; then we shall be sure they’re the men, and when we’ve got them we must hope they’ll confess.’

‘They’ll not go out of this ship alive unless they confess,’ said Tom.

‘If they confess under terror will their confession help you, sir?’ said Will.

‘Johnstone is the son of a lawyer, Bates,’ said Tom.

‘But there’s good sense in the question, Butler,’ said the mate. ‘They may swear their confession was a lie, that they were forced into telling it by your threats to hang them.’

‘The terms of the confession shall provide against that, and every man in this ship shall witness it. Let them confess; I’ll take my chance of what may follow.’

‘Will Rotch and the other be free here, Tom?’ I asked.

‘No.’

‘Then we remain short-handed as before?’ said Will.

‘There’s a seaman along with the two—you’ve forgotten him,’ exclaimed Tom. ‘He’ll make four, and Marian five.’

‘Where do you propose to head when you start?’ exclaimed the mate.

‘North, Bates; I can’t keep you and young Johnstone at sea. Not likely! You’ll help me to work the brig as far as Sound-

ings ; then go ashore in whatever will take you, along with the yarn that we'll manufacture before that time.'

'What'll you do?' said the mate.

'Oh, keep the sea—keep the sea until Rotch and Nodder confess. Eh, Marian? This brig's a tight little home for us, as safe a retreat in its way as the island, helping us to such an issue of truth or justice or retribution as we should never be able to work out in Glass's settlement. Eh, my brave girl? As lief be here as on a rock ; and then the delights of a devil's cruise with our two Old Bailey witnesses under hatches! Why 'twould be like one of our old river and suburban jaunts—so pretty and lively that we may grieve when the rogues' confession ends it.'

'We'll take Miss Johnstone ashore with us,' said Bates, 'when the time comes for us to go.'

I looked at him with a frown ; Tom's eye was upon me, and he laughed, but with little merriment.

'You and Marian'll never handle this brig alone,' said Will.

Tom was looking at me, and pretended not to hear him. Bates left the table to see that all was right with the little vessel. By the time he returned Tom's mood had changed. He spoke quietly, and without the least temper, of the morrow's arrangements. It was dark by the time the talk had ended. I lighted the cabin lamp, Will the binnacle lamp, and Tom and Bates walked the roof of the deck-house in earnest talk. Will beckoned me out of the cabin to where he was standing, near the wheel, and said softly: 'Marian, beware of Tom; he's been driven mad.'

'No more mad than you are,' said I.

'What does he mean by talking of swinging the two men?'

'I'll help him if he asks me,' said I.

'And be hanged. This is what comes of following a convict's fortune. He speaks of himself as a devil. He talks like one, anyhow. Worst of all, he's making you one. There shall be no hanging if I'm here to stop it, though Butler should pistol me for interfering.'

'You're excited, and I'll not talk with you.'

‘Mustn’t he be mad,’ he exclaimed, careful, however, to keep his voice sunk, ‘to threaten to sail about with you alone in this brig till the fellows under hatches, as he calls it, confess? Suppose they make up their minds to see which will tire first? Besides, how are two of you to sail a brig of this bulk? Why, his island scheme was beautiful sanity alongside this last bit of roaring madness.’

‘I’ll ask you to mind your own business,’ I cried. ‘Have you a heart? Have you any capacity of feeling? Did those two fellows spare Tom? Look what they’ve brought him to. And shall we not right ourselves in our own fashion if the chance offers? Wear irons as Tom has, sweat in forced labour in a convict’s dress, be ruined, degraded, broken-hearted, yet innocent as Tom is, and imagine the villains who falsely swore you into ruin, misery, exile, in your power. Would you damp their pale brows with lavender water, wash their weary feet, offer them your forgiveness with caresses, promise to plead for them in your prayers? Chaw! You’re no man, Will!’

I swung on my heels in a passion, and left him.

That evening, until ten or thereabouts, we sat in the cabin. I believed Tom guessed what was in Will's mind. The lad had a bright, handsome face. A little thing would bring his heart into his eyes, and all that he felt he looked, with colour, with paleness, with wild stares (as when he came to me after seeing Lieutenant Chimmo murdered), with a fine light of merriment when he was amused. For the first time I could recollect, my sweetheart went carefully, and with scarce any temper, through the story of Rotch's accusation. He related how he had punished the man for rudeness to a young lady at a South American fandango ; how he had reported him and lost him his berth for sleeping whilst on duty, and for other reasons. He exactly described how the treacherous, shocking conspiracy against him had been worked out and executed by Rotch, with the help of Nodder ; how the holes had been pierced by Rotch, the auger hidden in his (Tom's) cabin, the lazarette entered by Rotch when there was no sort

of stores in it at that time to warrant the visit. He said he never understood why Nodder conspired against him. He supposed Rotch had tempted the beast with drink, with an offer of money, and the promise of a mate's place in the barque, if he (Rotch) got command. With his eyes fixed upon Will, he drew a few pictures of his sufferings in jail, and of his life in the hulk.

Bates listened closely ; the worthy fellow was stirred to the heart by Tom's simple recital of his wrongs and sufferings. Will's face flushed with sympathy and temper as he listened ; I see his looks now as he leaned on the table under the cabin lamp, with his eyes moistening at intervals. As for me, I sat quiet till Tom had done, though I was half distracted by the passion and grief, the wrath and wild regrets which arose as my sweet-heart proceeded, until, on his ending with a sob in his voice and his hands to his brow, I could bear myself no longer, and, springing up, I flung my arms around him and held him to me with my lips pressed to his cheek, down which my own tears ran.

‘Curse them!’ cried Will, starting up; ‘they shan’t live for the want of a hangman, if they don’t confess!’

He made the sentence violent by a strong forecastle oath, and, striking the table with his clenched fist, walked out of the cabin, talking loudly to himself out of his overwrought feelings.

The rest of the night passed quietly. Tom bade me go to bed, and I went to my berth, but not before I had paced the deck for a quarter of an hour with him. The weather was wonderfully silent, and the darkness beautiful with stars. The light wind held; the four of us prayed it would hold till after daybreak, though Tom said the islanders at this time of the year made nothing of putting out to sea to vessels six or even eight miles distant. The large black swell rolled soundlessly; off the ocean no noise came save the low, faint thunder of the surf whitening afar at the base of the giant shadow. I slept but little; all the most tragic and startling incidents of this passage of my life, from the hour

when news of Tom's imprisonment was given to me at Ramsgate by my aunt, were as naught—were as trifles lighter than thinnest air—alongside this, our lighting upon Rotch and Nodder in yonder island, hidden away in the heart of earth's mightiest stretch of waters.

The instant I heard a movement on deck I sprang out of my bunk, apparelled myself for the day, and, going forth, found a streak of granite-coloured dawn in the east, the night still black and full of stars over our mastheads and in the west, and Tom and the others squaring the yards to a light northerly wind that would directly float us toward the island.

The sun rose; the day flashed out blue and cloudless to his beam. Will took the helm, and the island soared directly over our bow, rich with the morning dyes, to where it vanished in motionless masses of steam-white vapour. I lighted the galley fire and got breakfast. Having hove the brig to within a mile and a half of the settlement, we made a

meal on deck, Tom every few minutes leveling the telescope at the beach where the whale-boat lay.

At about eight o'clock the island boat put off. She came slowly, floating deep, and looked pretty full of men. When she was midway, Tom, after talking quietly and earnestly with Bates, withdrew to his cabin to feign sickness, as had been arranged. On the boat drawing alongside, I observed that all the people were strangers, saving old Daly. There were eight men, some of them young. Daly made the ninth. I had supposed whilst the boat approached that Rotch and Nodder were amongst the little crowd in her, but no faces answered to theirs, which I recollected as clearly—the handsome features of Rotch, the red locks and wall-eye of the curled, sour, drink-sodden carpenter Nodder—as though I beheld their likenesses.

The boat was handsomely laden with potatoes, pieces of fresh beef, poultry, eggs, and other produce. Daly came over the side with a little bright tin can in his hand. He immediately stepped up to me, and with a

quaint old sea-bow and a sea-flourish, said he had taken the liberty to bring me off a drink of milk; 'twas fresh from one of his own cows that morning, he assured me. There was no sweeter draught, said he, than a can of new milk after a few months of salt water. I thanked him heartily. Of all delicious draughts, the delicatest that I remember in seventy-seven years was that drink of new milk from the island of Tristan d'Acunha.

Daly told Mr. Bates that Corporal Glass was still too unwell to come off; he sent his compliments to the captain, and begged a visit. Bates answered that the captain was poorly and confined to his bed. Then Daly brought the islanders up to us and introduced them; two of them were sons of the corporal, others sons of Cotton, Swain, and Green. Daly's own son was a man of about thirty, strong, active, and good-looking, tinctured with the blood of a mulatto mother. They swiftly discharged their whale-boat, got the *Childe Harold's* quarter-boat, stowed casks for filling with fresh water, and pulled away for the island.

I went to Tom and gave him the news. He came out of his berth on hearing the islanders were gone, and walked about the deck, and looked at the stuff that had been brought off; then went with Bates and Will into the hold, where they passed up one to another a number of parcels of clothing till as much was on deck as the provisions which had been brought off were worth.

It was past one o'clock when the boats put off for the brig. The whale-boat came along with ours in tow. It was blowing a soft steady air of wind out of the north; the sky was cloudless; the rippling of water made you think of a gentle noise of girlish laughter, and the heave of the swell shouldered in stately volumes out of the west, wide drawn and round-backed, so that the movements of the brig were like a pulse. Tom rested the telescope on the bulwark rail and looked at the approaching boats. He continued to gaze; I feared the boats would draw near enough to enable the people to see him. He suddenly turned to me with a pale face that was yet dark with a frown, and exclaimed:

‘Marian, Rotch and Nodder are there!’ With that he gave the telescope to Bates, and merely adding, ‘Report when the islanders are gone and you’ve trimmed for the start,’ he walked to his berth.

My heart now began to beat wildly, and I felt faint and sick with excitement. Will and Bates looked at me. I said: ‘I’ll withdraw to the end of the deck-house. Does not my face tell a story?’

‘You look like a ghost,’ exclaimed Will, ‘and your eyes are like live coals! Go right away aft, and keep quiet, and take time to screw your fiddlestrings of nerves into tune. Mr. Bates and I’ll manage better without you.’

I mounted to the roof of the house and posted myself at the extreme end. There was a chair there. I placed it so that I could command a view of the gangway, and there I sat, still very sick and faint, detesting myself for this weakness, yet excusing myself, too, for surely never could there happen a moment in a woman’s life more charged with supreme tragic interest than this.

The two boats drew alongside, the quarter-boat laden with casks of fresh water. The first to step on deck was Rotch. I knew him instantly. His face, whilst he stood in the witness-box, giving evidence against Tom, had burnt itself into my memory. I should have been able then, as I should be able now, to pick him out in a moment from amongst a thousand. He sprang into the main-chains and got over the bulwarks actively. He was dressed in blue cloth and a blue cloth cap with a naval peak. His face was sallow, as though he was newly recovered from an illness. He was of Tom's height, without my sweetheart's manly breadth and inimitable sailorly carriage. But he was an exceedingly handsome man. Many might have thought him handsomer than Tom.

After he had come on board there was some delay. Two or three vigorous islanders then climbed over the side, and, with much trouble and no little peril—for the swell hove the boat very high and sank her very low, whilst the brig leaned heavily away and then depressed her other rail till you thought she

had submerged the line of it—the carpenter Nodder was lifted through the gangway. He stood with difficulty and leaned upon an islander's arm. He was at some little distance from me, but my sight was good; he seemed ghastly ill, the ghastlier because of the length of his greasy, carrotty locks of hair and the villainous aspect he took from his deformed eye. He was dressed in old canvas trousers, an old monkey-jacket, and a fur cap.

I had lost sight of Rotch. Bates spoke to Nodder. Whilst this was doing, a third fellow came on board; he was John Collins, the seaman who had been saved with Rotch and the carpenter. He took hold of Nodder and led him slowly forward and helped him into the forecastle through the scuttle.

I'll now tell you what happened as straightforwardly and briefly as I can dictate it. The islanders went to work to get the water on board and stow the casks. They sprang like goats, so fleet were their sure feet, as mountaineers. Collins came out of the forecastle and helped them. I walked toward the fore part of the deck-house to observe that man;

he was just a plain, average example of the foremast-hand, freckled, yellow-haired, a mat of reddish beard upon his throat, big, silly, wandering eyes; his clothes, duck breeches, flannel shirt, and old Scotch cap. I drew back, hearing the voice of Rotch, and returned to my chair.

Presently they had whipped all the water below and were busy in hoisting the quarter-boat aboard. Whilst this was doing, Rotch came up the deck-house steps; he looked at the island whilst he mounted the ladder, and did not observe me till he was on the roof of the house. He came to a stand very abruptly, and, after staring with many tokens of astonishment in his posture and looks, lifted his cap. I turned my head. No doubt he was surprised to find a well-dressed woman sitting on the deck-house top of that little brig of two hundred tons.

Well dressed I was, as dress then went; to be sure, I had worn my gown every day during the fortnight we had been on board the *Old Stormy*, but then it was almost a new dress when I took it off and packed it up at

Woolwich, and it still looked new. I remember that gown very well; it was of black merino with a velvet cape, long sleeves for which I had no wristbands, the bodice with an embroidered collar and bound to the waist by a band. My hat was narrow-brimmed with curled feathers; this sort of headgear had not long been in fashion when I purchased the thing. I was without jewelry and other finishing details, but the fellow Rotch, at a little distance, would detect no omissions; he found a well-dressed, nay, I may almost call the figure a fashionably-dressed woman viewing the proceedings of the islanders, and his bearing and prolonged stare expressed his surprise.

I was unable to look at him; that is, whilst he looked at me. The devil that was in Tom was in me too. I could have shot the horrid villain as he stood there. But now, in the corners of my eyes, I beheld him approaching. I trembled violently; the throbbing of my heart made me feel ill again. Yet I thought to myself, if the man accosts me I must answer and be civil. Times are when

the human instincts are preternatural in divination. The contagion of our secret may have been in the air. Such must be that villain's conscience that, let him suspect a trap, no matter how dim and faint his suspicion, he'd fling himself into the whale-boat while she was still alongside, and Tom would lose him.

Rightly or wrongly, thus I thought, in the few seconds of his approach; and now he stood close and was addressing me.

'May I inquire,' said he, lifting his cap again, 'if I have the pleasure of speaking to the wife of the captain of this brig?'

I knew that my face was of a milky whiteness, my mouth was dry, my breathing laboured. I answered low and tremulously, 'I am not the wife of the captain.'

Do not believe that I was afraid. I was sick and cold and shivered with the passion I hid. I dared not lift my eyes, lest beholding the dog with his smile and bland looks I should leap to my feet, spit in his face, strike and curse him.

'You are, perhaps, a passenger, madam?' said he.

I slightly inclined my head, keeping my eyes fastened upon the island.

‘I understand,’ he continued, ‘that this brig’s destination is Table Bay. It is very fortunate for me that you have called here. Ships’ visits grow scarcer and scarcer, and a man might easily be imprisoned for a whole twelvemonth in yonder wretched but hospitable little colony.’

At this instant Will came up the ladder and stood at the head of the steps, astounded to observe me talking with Rotch.

‘My misfortunes have been overwhelming!’ exclaimed the villain, speaking in a tone that let me know he preserved his courtesy-smile, though I never turned my eyes from the island save when I glanced at Will. ‘My beautiful ship, the *Arab Chief*, a vessel I was as proud of as a man of his handsome wife, was burned to the water’s edge through two or three scoundrel seamen broaching the cargo with a naked light. Our sufferings in the boat were terrible. We put off with barely a day’s allowance of fresh water and a handful or two of biscuits. The islanders may have

told you in what state they found us. My mate Nodder is very ill. He injured himself somehow when leaving the ship. I hope your captain will not be disappointed. He probably counts upon the help of three working men. I shall be very happy to do my share. I am sorry to hear that he is not well. Pray, madam, what is his name? The islanders who were off yesterday did not get it.'

I rose, saying, under my breath, 'Excuse me. I want to speak to that young gentleman,' and walked to Will, panting, as though a poisoned arrow had pierced me, with an anguish of emotion I could no longer support.

'He came and spoke to me,' I whispered. 'I must have torn his eyes out had I listened longer.'

I went down the ladder and stood near the wheel. Mr. Bates stepped over from the gangway to tell me that he believed the carpenter Nodder was a dying man. 'He has only shipped himself for us to bury him,' said he. 'He'll pull no more ropes in this world.'

‘God won’t let him die till he confesses, I hope,’ said I. ‘The villain Rotch addressed me just now, and has made me sick and mad, Mr. Bates, with his talk of his beautiful ship, the *Arab Chief*. When will those islanders let us get away?’

There remained, however, little to be done. They had chocked and secured the quarter-boat, and were now gathered in a group round the parcels of clothing they had agreed to take in exchange for watering us and for provisions. Bates left me to join them. Daly said they were well satisfied. The old man then told the others to pass the bundles into the whale-boat. Just over my head stood Rotch talking with Will. He was speaking of me, asked if I was a relation of the captain, if I lived at Cape Town, and so forth. He also said, ‘What’s your captain’s name?’ to which Will responded, as I had, by running down the ladder as though he had not heeded the inquiry because of some sudden call upon his attention.

The islanders now went away. Before going, Daly and the others shook hands with

us. The old man-of-war's man, holding my hand, exclaimed, 'Bless your pretty face, miss! It calls up my old home to me. Ye'll not take an old man's blessing amiss. May God be wi' ye, and my prayer shall go along wi' ye for your safety.' He then, with the others, called a farewell to Rotch, who remained on top of the deck-house, looking down, and in a few minutes the white whale-boat, with her simple, hearty, honest crew, was pulling away for the lonely, towering island.

Mr. Bates bade the new hand Collins ship the gangway. Rotch came down and looked at the compass that stood before the little wheel; I was nigh, and he took but a peep on seeing me.

'Johnstone, take the wheel,' said the mate, 'whilst we swing the yards.'

He and Collins walked to the maintop-sail brace; Rotch followed and pulled with them.

They braced the yards fore and aft, and whilst they were belaying the ropes in the waist I heard Rotch say, 'This is a taut

bowline, isn't it, for a northerly wind and an east-by-north course?' The mate did not answer.

The brig was at this time under topsails and foresail only and some fore and aft canvas. The wind had scanted, but blew a weak air; the breasts of the sails lifted, and the stem of the brig drove ripples from the bows, and the giant mass of land on the starboard quarter slid almost imperceptibly into the wake.

'Collins,' cried Bates, 'take the wheel from that young gentleman.'

The mate then stepped up to me, leaving Rotch in the waist, that is, near the little caboose.

'Now,' said he, looking somewhat pale, 'what's next to be done?'

'Call Rotch aft,' said I; 'I'll bring Captain Butler out.'

'Collins,' said the mate, 'keep her just as she goes. Captain Rotch, will you please step this way into the cabin?'

I went in first; Bates and Will followed. I saw Rotch coming as I knocked on Tom's

door and entered. My sweetheart stood against his bunk, one hand gripping the edge of it, and his head inclined forward in a strained, hearkening posture. His face was colourless, the expression hard and set; his eyes shone under the shadow of a frown of fierce determination.

I said, speaking with difficulty, so great was my agitation: 'The islanders have left the brig. We have started, and the man's in the cabin.'

'Bates and Will? They must hear and see.'

'They, too, are in the cabin.'

'Where's Nodder?'

'Lying ill in the forecastle.'

On this he opened the door and went out; I was at his heels. Rotch stood on the other side of the cabin table, Will at the foot, and near him Bates; Rotch was at that instant addressing the mate. When he saw Tom the movement of his lips was arrested as though he had been shot through the heart. He stared in a sort of gaping way—the expression is not to be described. Let me call it

chilling, benumbing amazement, with horror and fear, like a sort of life, creeping into it. I had read of men changing colour under mental tension of an extravagant kind ; I witnessed this now ; whilst Rotch looked, gaping, the blankness of amazement taking a vitality from the incrawling horror, his balls of sight strained as though he beheld his fate in the form of some frightful phantom, his complexion changed colour ; not from the white of fear to the crimson of rage ; it turned, whilst I looked, into a sort of dim, blueish purple, as if he had been poisoned. His lips then moved and he stammered out, in a voice that was half a scream—the words bursting from him—‘ You here ! ’ The next instant he sprang toward the door. But Tom stood close to the entrance ; with a single stride he blocked the way, and said, ‘ Stand back ! ’

‘ Let me go ! ’ cried Rotch, suddenly recovering the full use of his lungs. ‘ Mr. Bates, help me to signal the island boat. She’s not ashore yet. That man means to murder me. You’re not going to stand by and allow

him to take my life? Let me go! There's time to recall the boat. That man means to take my life. I call upon you to help and save me. I never suspected this!'

He plunged afresh at the door. I don't doubt that terror and rage gave him the strength of two or even three men at that moment; yet Tom met him as he came, caught him by the throat and hurled him against the bulkhead from which he had run, driving him against the solid wooden wall with a crash which you'd think should have beaten him in recoil senseless upon his face.

'No violence, no violence, I beg, gentlemen!' shouted the mate.

'But a step and I'll strangle you!' said Tom, making a single stride toward Rotch.

'Collins,' roared the villain, 'they've brought me into this ship to murder me! Help! I'm your captain! Quick, Collins! Signal to the whale-boat! Port your helm for the island——'

Will rushed to the door.

'Stop where you are!' he shouted. 'There's no murder being done here! No-

body's going to be hurt! Keep your luff! If you're just a little bit off your course you will be sent to hell!'

'Marian, Bates, Johnstone,' exclaimed Tom, pointing at Rotch, 'that's the man you have sometimes heard me name! He is called Rotch—Samuel Rotch. He was my chief mate aboard the *Arab Chief*. I gave you the story last night. You saw how I dealt with him just now. It was in that way I served him at Valparaiso when the toad insulted a lady of my acquaintance at a dance there. That was the man who slept in his watch on deck when the sea was thick with shipping. He lost his berth, but I got him another; and I let him serve under me in the *Arab Chief*, when he was named as chief mate. You, Rotch!' He drew a pistol from his pocket—one of the brace we had found in the brig—and put it upon the table. For some while he eyed Rotch steadily in silence. I believed he meant to shoot him. Had he offered, I, standing close beside, should have struck away the hand that attempted to hinder him.

Rotch looked ghastly. He trembled from head to foot. His hands worked with a strange, spasmodic motion, as though he would lift and clasp them in entreaty.

‘You Rotch,’ repeated Tom, after a silence that had lasted at least a minute—a minute that seemed an hour; ‘we were on very good terms during the first part of our voyage. I talked to you somewhat freely, told you of my engagement with this young lady, of my venture in the barque, and to what extent I had protected it, and I spoke hopefully of the voyage to you. And all the time you were plotting my ruin. Was it that you hated me for that little affair at Valparaiso? For reporting you and losing you a berth? For holding command in a ship which you supposed you’d obtain charge of if you could get me out of the road? Surely, you Rotch, these provided but shabby foundations for the heavy weight of villainy you constructed upon them.’

At this point he picked up the pistol and replaced it in his pocket.

‘What was your scheme? Nodder was second mate and carpenter. What you pro-

mised him, how you bribed him, I don't know. He'll tell me before he dies. But what you did was this: You took an auger from his tool-chest. You and he pierced the skin and side in the lazarette. You plugged the inner skin, hid the auger in my cabin—you found it easily enough afterwards!—took men to listen to the water flowing, brought them into my berth, searched for the auger, charged me with attempting to scuttle the ship, and made a prisoner of me. Was this so?'

Rotch stood listening, with his eyes fixed upon the deck. He made no answer.

'Marian,' said Tom, 'you were present at my trial. You remember how glibly he gave his evidence and answered questions on his oath. Will he take his oath now that his story was true? You Rotch, here stands my friend Bates, who has judged me throughout a wronged man; here stands Miss Johnstone's cousin, who believes me innocent; here stands that Miss Johnstone about whom I have so often talked to you. They hear me. They will listen to you. Is it true that I attempted to scuttle the *Arab Chief*?'

Rotch kept silence.

‘Bates, Johnstone,’ continued Tom, ‘you see how it is? He swore it on the Bible. He made a felon of me. He ruined my life—broke my heart. He’s mute now. Observe him. Does he fear to speak because I’m armed?’

He whipped the pistol out of his pocket, pointed it down and fired it into the deck.

‘Now, take courage! Speak! Did I attempt to scuttle the *Arab Chief*, or was the charge yours and Nodder’s conspiracy against me?’

The man, with an ashen face, now folded his arms, but made no reply, keeping his eyes still rooted to the deck.

‘Captain Rotch,’ exclaimed Mr. Bates, ‘it’s clear to my mind—it’s been clear to me all through—that you’ve done this gentleman such a horrible wrong that no fiend could imagine anything worse or more cruel! Act the man now and own to it. Clear him, and by so doing sweeten your own conscience against that call which’ll be coming to you from God sooner or later. You’ll fare less ill

by shelling out than by keeping silent. Look, man, how you are in our power !’

At these words Rotch lifted his eyes and gazed steadily at Tom. Never could I have imagined such an expression of hate in the human face. He gazed, then sank his eyes again, but never spoke.

‘Rotch, you shall have time,’ Tom said. ‘In this brig you remain till the confession you dictate has been signed by you and witnessed by those who are in the vessel. Time you shall have. Its duration Mr. Bates and I will settle. If at the expiration of the time I allow you refuse to prove me the innocent man you know me to be, then, by the Eternal God of heaven and justice, I’ll hang you at the yardarm !’

This said, he strode to the after end of the cabin, and opening the door of the last berth on the port side, he cried out, ‘Walk in here !’

Rotch raised his head and slowly looked around him. A wonderful change had happened in the man’s countenance. He was bloated and swollen. Parts of his face were

livid, and parts a ghastly white. His eyes had a strained appearance and seemed to project. I once saw a man tumble down in a fit near my house at Stepney, and Rotch's face reminded me of that man's when they turned him over and lifted his head.

‘Walk into this berth!’ cried Tom.

This time the villain obeyed. He moved slowly, supporting himself by the table as he went. He entered the little cabin, and Tom shut the door and locked it.

‘He's as much astounded as frightened,’ said Bates. ‘Surely he'd have thought to meet any one down here sooner than you. Where would he reckon you are, Butler, if not across the seas? Not afloat and in charge of a smart little brig, anyhow.’

‘Tom,’ said I, ‘he'll hang rather than confess. He looked at you with a horribly malicious, wicked eye.’

My sweetheart came to the table and leaned upon it to breathe and rally. He was very pale, but his eyes glowed with the light of a savage satisfaction, and his general expression was one of sullen, wrathful exultation.

The hour was now about four o'clock. We had made no mid-day meal. I asked Tom if I should get some dinner for the little company of us.

'Aye,' said he ; 'but first I want a word with our new hand. Take the wheel from him, Will, and send him in.'

The man Collins entered, dangling his Scotch cap. He was scared ; the pistol report had no doubt frightened him heartily. The wheel stood right in front of the house, the door and little windows were open, and the man would need to be deaf not to hear what had passed.

'What is your name?' said Tom.

'John Collins, sir.'

'What was your rating aboard the *Arab Chief*?'

'Able seaman, sir.'

'I'm master of this little brig till I find an owner for her,' said Tom. 'We're going to work her north so as to get Great Britain handy aboard, should any of us turn sick of the sea and want to go ashore. We're not bound to the Cape, as you've been led to

believe. It's all the same to you, I suppose?'

'I'd rather make a straight passage home, of course,' answered the man.

'We're not pirates, as what you've been listening to might lead you to fear. You can cheer up, my lad, reckon that you've got a good berth, and that all will go well with you. See here, now : I commanded the *Arab Chief* when Rotch was her chief mate and Nodder second and carpenter. Those two scoundrels swore that I attempted to scuttle her to defraud the insurance offices ; they brought me before the court and got me sentenced to a term of transportation. I happen to be here in this brig off the island of Tristan d'Acunha when they, along with you, are sent aboard me as shipwrecked men wanting to get away. This is the act of God, Collins ! Collins, it's a large and beautiful mercy shown to a broken-hearted man, and an opportunity he's been made too much of a devil by Rotch to despise. Before my two villains leave this brig they sign a confession, declaring that their charge against me was a shocking, horrible lie ; that they

themselves made the holes in the barque and hid the auger in my cabin. Rotch is the bigger villain ; the other's an illiterate, drunken scoundrel. Rotch shall have time granted him if he——'

'Tom,' I interrupted, 'Collins wants to speak.'

I had been watching the fellow whilst my sweetheart addressed him, and observed his face take a sort of colour and grow full of meaning. Tom arrested his speech. Collins, twisting his Scotch cap in both hands, exclaimed :

'Captain, it's come upon me now! I had a sort o' fancy o' 't whilst I stood a-listening. You'll be the party meant, and I'll just give you what's in my head whilst I've got it. I was at the wheel one night from ten to twelve, about a fortnight afore we was burnt out of the ship.'

'You mean the *Arab Chief*?' said Mr. Bates.

'Oh yes!' I cried wildly. 'For God's sake, don't interrupt him, Mr. Bates!'

'Well, as I says,' continued the man, after

a pause and a slow, unintelligent stare at me, 'I was at the wheel. Nodder, he had charge of the deck. He'd been drinking. I'll say here that that there Nodder was never off drinking. I don't believe he was sober two hours together down to the moment when we was burnt out. He gives me a certain course to steer by. 'Twarn't the course the chap I'd relieved had named. The capt'n—that's Rotch—comes up, looks into the binnacle, calls Nodder, and hazes him for being off his course. Nodder gives it him back. I reckon that the capt'n had taken a drop too much himself. They clenches fists, and snorts all kinds of insults at each other. Nodder says: "I'll gibbet ye yet for a bloody conspirator against an honestest man than ever slept in your fired skin. 'Twas you who put me up to that job. I ha'n't had no peace since, and where is my fifty pounds?" Here Rotch whispers through his teeth and takes him by the arm, and falls a-shoving of him out of my hearing. And still Nodder sings out whilst t'other was a-shoving: "I'll gibbet ye yet. The lie was yourn, the whole b'iling of it was

yourn. Who hid the auger? Who told me to spin that yarn to the crew about the capt'n coming for'ards to ask me to lend him an auger?''

Tom struck the table a furious blow with his clenched fist.

'Tell us all you know, Collins,' I cried.

'Why,' said he, picking up his cap and fastening a nervous eye on Tom, 'that's pretty nigh all I do know. They shut up arter this and went below for a drink, then walked the deck. Capt'n Rotch seemed to make nothen of my overhearing him, as though 'twasn't a business the likes of me was going to trouble his head over. And he was right. I don't recollect mentioning what I'd heard except once, about a week afore we was burnt out, when there was some trouble over the starboard watch's allowance of sugar; then I tells one of my mates that the capt'n and Nodder had got some dirty secret between them, and that each seemed in t'other's power. But nothen was made of this, and then comes the fire. It whips into my head whilst I stood a-listening to

ye just now, and, capt'n, I've told ye the truth.'

'This should be taken down,' said Bates.

'Can you write, Collins?' asked Tom.

The man, with a grin, answered 'No.'

'Give Collins a glass of grog,' said Tom.

I mixed a draught, and the man drank our health. Tom then said :

'Collins, will you dictate to this lady the yarn you've just spun us?'

'Willingly, sir.'

'I thank you,' said Tom.

He then bade me procure writing materials whilst he and Bates went to the forecandle to look at Nodder. I told Collins to sit, and wrote down just as he talked. I felt heartily grateful to the man ; here, now, was a piece of valuable testimony in Tom's favour ; this sailor, when he told his story, did not even know the name of the man he was addressing ; and then, how could he have invented that stroke about the auger and that other point which had made Tom strike the table—I mean the statement that Captain Butler had asked Nodder for the loan of the auger?

I was so pleased that, guessing he might be hungry, I put before him the best cold meal I could hastily collect, and made him drink some wine. Indeed, I waited upon him as though this poor, plain, silly-eyed sailor had been Tom himself. I asked many questions about Rotch and Nodder. He had nothing very ill to say of Rotch ; Nodder he called a drunken, bungersome nughead. (He was of Somersetshire.)

When he had finished eating he relieved Will. I told my cousin to see to the galley fire and laid the cloth for a late dinner, and whilst I was thus busy, Tom and Bates, talking together very earnestly, came along the deck and entered the cabin. I showed my sweetheart what I had taken down ; he said : ‘ Let the man put his mark here, and the three of you witness it whilst I hold the wheel.’

Bates read the deposition aloud, and then Collins made a cross, and we signed our names. This was a precious document. I would not have parted with it for all I was worth. I put it carefully away in the desk

we had found in the cabin I occupied, and then returning I eagerly asked Tom what he had to tell me about Nodder.

‘He’s a surly, stubborn hound,’ said he; ‘very ill, and, in my opinion, dying. We lighted the forecastle lamp; we found him lying in the dark and groaning now and again. I stood apart while Bates spoke to him. Bates asked him how he did. He answered, with an oath, that he felt very low. Bates long-windedly put further questions to him. He then said: “D’ye know what brig you’re aboard of?” “The *Old Stormy*, ain’t it?” says Nodder. “Yes,” says Bates; “and d’ye know who her captain is?” “No,” answers the carpenter. “He’s Captain Butler,” says Bates, “who was in command of the *Arab Chief*, that you and Rotch charged him with attempting to scuttle.” The man lay silent a bit, and then said: “I don’t believe it.” “Rotch does,” said Bates; “he’s locked up, and Captain Butler means to hang him if, after a given time, he doesn’t confess that you and he conspired together to ruin him.” Here Nodder, who had been lying on his

back all this while, sat up and said : " There's no Butler in this ship. I heered him sentenced, and he was lagged for fourteen year." On this I stepped out of the eyes of the fore-castle, where I had stood unobserved, and coming under the lamp, where he could see me plainly, I said : " D'ye know me? Your memory should be as good as Rotch's." The scoundrel looked, shut his eyes, looked, blinked and looked again, cursed awhile, and lay back. I'd made up my mind to head on a new tack with this fellow—that is, to trim him differently from my handling of Rotch. I said quietly : " Nodder, you're a sick and a dying man. How did you serve me who never injured you? You ruined me, made a convict of me, broke my heart. You were a tool in Rotch's hands, and I believe you'd have undone the mischief before we reached England had you found courage. Rotch was the villain, you were his instrument." He now turned his head to look at me, and lay like a corpse with his eyes fastened upon my face. I couldn't swear that he had his mind, that he clearly understood; the fright and

wonder of seeing me stirred the mud in his soul and thickened his brain. Still I talked on. I told him that I had Rotch under lock and key, and should hang him if he didn't confess. I repeated what Collins had told me. I then said that my enemy was Rotch ; that he was the man I meant to get at and punish. "If you'll dictate the truth to me," said I, "tell us the full story of the diabolical plot, and sign it, that your signature may be witnessed, I'll let you go. If you live to get north, I'll put you ashore, and you shall be no more troubled, unless you are willing to turn Queen's evidence so as to help me to bring Rotch to his trial." This was, in effect, what I said. I spoke quietly, even kindly. Like Rotch, he made no answer ; he lay looking at me, and when I had done, still looked ; and I waited for him to speak. Bates implored him to confess. The fellow, silent as a ghost, turned over in his bunk and gave us his back. But it was early times. I was resolved not to threaten him. After waiting, I said to Bates, "We'll go." As we passed through the hatch, he called out in his harsh,

hideous voice, though feebly enough: "Won't you send me a drop of sperrits? I don't want nothin' to eat." "You shall be attended to," said I, and we came away.'

'What hopes of him have you?'

'He may be brought to confess.'

'Would his unsupported confession suffice, Tom?'

'Suffice for what?'

'To obtain a full pardon.'

He looked at me gravely, then, with a slight smile, said: 'We'll think of the navigation of the brig for the present, and talk of full pardons by-and-by.'

CHAPTER XLIV

SHE WITNESSES NODDER'S CONFESSION

THE islanders had brought some fresh meat on board ; I fried a steak, also boiled some eggs, potatoes, and vegetables. Taking the *Childe Harold* first, and now this *Old Stormy*, we had been keeping the sea many weeks. Tom's fare in the convict ship had been the prison's, Will had fed upon forecastle food, Mr. Bates and I had done just a little better—he at the cabin table and I at the scrap basket. The island produce, then, must make us a delicious meal.

The island was about three hours astern of us, distant about ten or twelve miles, a pile of sapphire, and the sea was of the same beautiful hue. The sky in the north was frosted with snow-white cloud running in links like chains, with a little plummy shooting as of mares' tails along the advanced brow of

the delicately compacted stuff. The wind blew out of that quarter; it was a dead-on-end wind for us; but the brig, under topsails and foresail, looked well up; and now that Will had loosed the fore and main top-gallant-sails, which had been sheeted home and the yards hoisted whilst I was in the galley, the little vessel was beginning to buzz over the wide blue heave of swell, and the wrinkles from her cutwater broke into thin lines of snow abreast of the gangways, as her nimble and metalled forefoot ate its way to windward.

I spied a white sail down in the south-west. She looked to be standing for the island. It was as likely as not we had been just in time to secure Messrs. Rotch and Nodder.

The discipline of the little ship had been settled by the hour I had done with my cooking. We were now four sailors and a girl who could make herself generally useful.

Whilst I was dishing the dinner, Will told me he had carried a pannikin of rum and some bread and meat into the forecastle. Nodder drained the pannikin, but refused the

food. Will accosted him civilly, having received his cue from Tom. The brute, after drinking, sat up and asked how it was that Captain Butler was out of quod. 'He was transported for fourteen years,' he said. 'He's got eleven or twelve year to sarve yet. Who's the smothered bloke that was down here a-calling of hisself Captain Butler?' Will answered: 'Rotch knows.' 'What's been done to him?' 'He's locked up just now,' says Will. 'Are they a-going to hang him?' 'If he don't confess.' On this Nodder lay back and turned his face to the brig's side, and Will came away.

When we sat down to dinner, Collins being at the helm, Tom cut some beef and filled a tumbler half full of wine, and sent the meal by Mr. Bates to Rotch. Bates was some time in the cabin with the villain; indeed, his own dinner was cooling. Suddenly Tom jumped up, and, going to my berth, which he used when he worked out his sights, the navigating instruments and charts being there, fetched some writing-paper, pen and ink. Bates at that moment appeared at the end of the

cabin; Tom called to him, 'Oblige me by putting these things into Rotch's berth.'

Bates did so, locked the door, sat down, and fell to his meal.

'Did he speak?' said Tom.

'Yes,' said the mate. 'He has an evil eye. He's aged ten years, too. He said: "Captain Butler talks of hanging me. Does he mean it?" "Yes," said I; "but you know how to save your life." "He hang me! That 'u'd be murder! Curse him! You're a brother sailor. Would you stand by and allow it to be done?" "I'm no brother sailor of yours," said I. "Right the man you've diabolically wronged by making a clean breast of your wickedness. If you don't, there's never a brother sailor aboard this brig that won't pull all his beef into the rope that yardarms ye!" I thought he'd fling himself upon me. His face was as full of devilish malice as you could have squeezed out of all hands aboard the convict ship. I put down his grub and came away. He didn't speak when I took in the paper and ink.'

The subject was changed, and the talk

that followed mainly concerned the routine to be adopted.

When I had cleared the table I stepped out to look at the island, and saw no more than a large, faint shadow seventeen or eighteen miles away. The wind had veered a trifle, and we were making a better course for the northern climb, though where we were bound to I no more knew than how this wild, strange adventure was to end. I felt weary, and, entering the deck-house, sat down at the foremost end of the table close to Tom's cabin door. I leaned my cheek on my hand and gave myself up to thought. Strange as it may seem, I was sensible of a secret grievous disappointment that the island scheme was closed. I longed to be Tom's wife. Had we arranged with Governor Glass to settle at Tristan, I might in a few weeks have been Tom's bride. At this rate, when were we to be married? If my sweetheart waited for Rotch to speak, the villain might keep us sailing about for months; unless, indeed, Tom hanged him, which was less likely to happen as time cooled his blood and mine.

And, certainly, to hang the man would be to murder him, as already I understood ; though assuredly had Tom put the yardarm rope into my hand and bade me pull, I'd have dragged—on that or on any other day—with less compunction than I'd have squashed a spider.

Whilst I thus sat thinking over such matters as these, in stepped Will ; he looked about and sat down. I heard a noise of feet overhead, and guessed that Tom and Bates walked the deck together. The sailor Collins steered ; the sunset glowed like a sheet of burning gold upon the skylight.

‘Marian,’ said Will, ‘how long is this roaming to last?’

‘I wish I could tell you,’ I answered.

‘Butler’s one goading idea just now is revenge. But I want to get home—rig out afresh—sign for a new ship—and start again. This sort of thing is merely pickling one. It will qualify me as a lobsouser, I dare say, but I’m learning nothing useful, never have a quadrant in my hand, and get no jobs of seamanship to do.’

‘Tom told you he’ll steer the brig straight for England, and put you and Bates in the way of getting home. What more do you want? But for him you’d have been murdered by the convicts. Or you might be lying dead in an open boat along with Captain Sutherland and the others. But you’re safe, and Tom’s steering you home.’

I spoke hotly and raised my voice. He stammered; he had not before taken this view of his deliverance perhaps.

‘Well,’ said he, ‘but look here, Marian; granted that Butler sends Bates and me home; you stay behind, what’s to become of you?’

‘That’s my business.’

‘Not yours only. I’m closer to you than Butler till you’re married. I’ve a right to consider your safety, anyway. You’re here through my help; your convict ship adventure was of my bringing about. It’s my duty to see you safe out of the mess your romancing love has carried you into.’

An angry answer was on my lips when the door of the berth close beside me was

opened, and Tom stepped out. I had not imagined he was there. Will changed colour. My sweetheart, with the pleasantest smile I had yet seen on his face, put his hand on the lad's shoulder, and exclaimed :

‘I couldn't help overhearing you, Johnstone. But I'm in time, I hope, to stop more from being said than you'd wish me to catch. I admire your devotion to your cousin and thank you for it. It is what I should expect of one with Marian's blood in him. Step this way, that our friend in the after-cabin yonder may not hear me.’

He led us into the berth I slept in, and closed the door.

‘Johnstone,’ said he, ‘I'll ask you a question or two. How do you know that I didn't attempt to scuttle the *Arab Chief*?’

The lad looked startled, and answered : ‘I don't know, yet I'll swear you never made the attempt.’

‘You wish to think me innocent, but you can't be sure?’

‘On the top of Collins's story I am sure,’ said Will.

*with
me
and i think*

‘Chaw! What is that evidence? Mere hearsay; the talk of a scoundrel seaman perhaps against his captain, and it’s two to one still even at that. How is Bates to know I’m guiltless? How is Marian, except of her great love and noble devotion and faith in me, to hold me innocent of a charge on which an intelligent jury and a sagacious judge condemned me, imprisoned me, expatriated me? Now,’ said he, talking with perfect temper, ‘I’ve a right to prove myself an honest man to you all, haven’t I? The machinery of proof, by a marvellous ordering of Providence, happens to be on board; I’m a little at a loss how to handle it; advise me, Johnstone.’

I seated myself at this point, and he put his arm round my neck, with a light, sarcastic smile as he looked at the lad.

‘There’s nothing to be done but wring the truth out of the beast,’ said Will.

‘How? As you wring a swab! Advise me, Johnstone.’

My cousin coloured, looked down, and was silent.

‘My lad,’ said Tom, after a pause, ‘you

cannot counsel me. Of course not. Neither can Bates. What's the key, then, to fit this lock? Why, patience. And patience means that I must keep my brace of villains aboard this brig till they confess, or sicken and die, never parting with them till I've torn the jewel they've robbed me of out of their black hearts. If I send you home you'll have nothing to complain of!'

'No, sir. But Marian——'

'Marian shall accompany you.'

'Never!' I cried, flinging his arm from my neck to look at him.

'Marian,' he said tenderly, 'you will do what I wish when the time comes. No man could swiftly strike out of such an amazing business as this a full and satisfying plan. You'll do what I wish, and help me by obeying.'

'But you mean to hang Rotch, Captain Butler?' said Will.

'In time I may, Johnstone, even if I have to carry him to the South Seas to do it. But the villain's span, you see, is not yet allotted, as far as I am concerned.'

‘Captain,’ said Will, ‘I’m sorry I interfered or spoke to Marian. You’re a man of honour ; you’ll do what’s right by my cousin.’

Tom smiled at him.

‘You will never get me to leave you!’ said I, jumping up and grasping my sweetheart’s arm.

‘You’re tired, dear ; the air is soft on deck, the evening is cloudless and beautiful. Wrap yourself up and I’ll carry a chair for you on to the deck-house roof.’

But matters were to come to a head more swiftly than ever I had dared dream. We had left Tristan five days behind us. In all this time the brig had gnawed her way to windward on a taut bowline, the breeze holding fresh and steady off the bow, the blue seas flowing in long, deep lines. Rotch throughout was waited upon by Mr. Bates. And first as to this man Rotch.

I frequently questioned the mate about him, and gathered this : He spoke little and ate poorly ; he craved for drink as though he burnt with a perpetual thirst of fever ; and

Bates put plenty of fresh water into his cabin, and rum enough to poison him out of hand, if ever he should have a mind for what I would now call a Barney-Abram drench. Bates told us the fellow was growing very thin in the face and falling away in the body; already his clothes were fitting him ill. He was restless, and Bates seldom entered his cabin without finding him pacing the little square of deck. It was Tom's wish that Bates should attend to the man; he was afraid to trust himself with him; and Will was young and green, and might by some well-meant whisper balk my sweetheart's scheme to terrify the man into a confession of truth.

Once, when Bates went in with the prisoner's dinner, Rotch, leaning against his bunk with his arms folded—so the mate described him—asked where they were sailing the brig to. Bates answered plainly, 'To England.' Rotch said: 'What does the man Butler mean to do with me?' Bates replied: 'He means to keep you with him till you prove his innocence; time will be granted; if you then fail, he'll hang you. He's a man of his word;

when you made a convict of him, you made a devil of him. He no longer holds human life in value. He'd shoot you through the head with as easy a heart as a felon brains a warder.' 'Suppose I do what he wants—what then?' asked Rotch. 'I don't know,' answered Bates. 'Find out,' said the man. (When this was put to Tom, he said: 'Let him confess, let the document bear his signature and be properly witnessed, and I'll hand him over to you, Bates—to you and to Will along with this brig and cargo—I'll leave you in the Channel by the first Frenchman who'll put me ashore in his country; what Miss Johnstone will do we'll consider. First let the man confess.') This was repeated to Rotch, who said to the mate: 'What would you do with me?' 'Establish Captain Butler's innocence,' answers the mate. 'The sooner you do it, the better you'll be used.' Rotch made no answer.

From this time, during the days I am now dealing with, he continued obstinately silent, a sullen, scowling figure of a man as Bates pictured him, losing flesh as though he fasted,

asking for nothing but fresh water to mix his rum with; for nothing but that. The brig had a few books; the mate placed two or three in Rotch's berth; they were never touched. Thus it was with Captain Samuel Rotch, whom I never once set eyes on after the day when he had been ordered into his berth and locked up by Tom. He was perfectly quiet; I'd sometimes fancy I heard a noise like a muttering, and I'd creep to his door to listen, hoping to hear him babble about Tom in a fit of delirium or out of the liquor which Bates told us he swallowed in quantities. But it was always imagination on my part; his berth was for ever as silent as a coffin.

As for Nodder—Mr. Bates waited upon that man for the reason that he waited upon Rotch. Tom distrusted his own temper, and was advised by me and Bates never to go into the forecastle. It was the mate's own wish to attend upon Nodder; he told me he was gaining a sort of influence over the fellow, who was miserably ill and suffering fearfully from some internal trouble, and who, attempt-

ing once at Bates's suggestion to quit his bunk and come on deck for fresh air, was in such agony when he stood that he fell down in a swoon, and Bates had to put his head through the scuttle and bawl to Will to help him pick the man up and put him into his bunk again.

I never can forget Mr. Bates's kindness at this time. The tears stand in my eyes, and I find myself loving his memory as that of a dear friend when I recall his unwearied anxiety and efforts to get the truth from the two villains. He was a person of a religious cast of mind, and in that, I think, strange as it may seem, lay his influence over Nodder, who seemed fully sensible that he was a dying man, and found a sort of consolation in conversing with the mate. It luckily happened that there were one or two points of sympathy between them. For example, Bates's mother had been a native of Nodder's birthplace; he knew the seaport well, and mentioned names, streets, shops, and the like, with which the man of course was well acquainted. Then the mate had sailed with a man who com-

manded a ship in which Nodder had made a voyage, and this man was the only person for whom Nodder had a good word.

This and much more the mate would tell Tom and me on his return from his forecastle visits. But all the while the villain answered no questions as to my sweetheart's guilt or innocence. He was too wary to say a word about Rotch, though Bates directly challenged him on one occasion about that point in Collins's statement, when during the drunken quarrel Nodder had asked the other what had become of the fifty pounds he had promised him.

'Yet,' said the mate to me, in the course of a long earnest talk, 'I honestly believe, Miss Johnstone, the fellow will shell out before he dies. How long he'll take in sinking I don't know. His looks aren't sweet and lively; I've known pleasanter minutes in my time than talking to that carrotty head, bolstered up, flickering out to the slush lamp with a dirty old blanket drawn to its throat. Yet he's now fallen into the trick of a wall-eyed look that makes me hopeful. I seem to

see the truth rising like a whale coming up to blow, though before it touches the surface it settles again.'

'How long do you give him to live?' said I.

'Why, a sea-dog of his cut,' said he, 'often holds on with such a grip as disappoints the most humane calculations. It isn't so much dying as drying out. Nature kind of embalms him, as a Yankee would say. It's salt and sun that does it. This chap might live to be sent ashore in the English Channel. Just the sort of a man he is to walk slowly, in shiny cloth and a face of tallow, out of a hospital, and sign articles a month afterwards for a warm voyage.'

Now, as well as I can remember, it was two days after this talk with Mr. Bates that I was in my berth mending my dress with a needle and thread from a sailor's housewife that had been found in the fore-castle. I don't recollect that we had taken the south-east trade-wind; the yards were square, a fresh, merry, sparkling breeze blew over the quarter, and the brig floated fast before it, sitting very

upright, with a slow, small, majestic curtsying motion in the length of her as she was underswept by the Atlantic swell that ran with the breeze.

Suddenly, someone knocked in an agitated manner upon my door; I cried: 'Who's there?'

The voice of Mr. Bates, not less indicative of excitement than his knuckles, cried: 'I want paper and ink as quickly as possible, Miss Johnstone.'

Here in my berth, which had been the captain's, was kept the brig's small stock of writing materials. Somehow I guessed what the mate wanted paper and pen for. I whipped on my dress and opened the door. He took what he needed, just saying, 'Nodder's offered to confess!' and hastened away. My heart at this news leapt up and half choked me with a sudden transport. It was drawing on to four o'clock in the afternoon; Tom was in his cabin resting. I put on my hat and went on to the deck and found Collins at the wheel. Will, who was in Tom's

watch, according to the disposition of our little company, was lying down.

Collins exclaimed: 'If you're seeking Mr. Bates, he's in the fore-castle.' I paced up and down in what is called the gangway between the deck-house front and caboose, and still, as I turned my back on the fore part of the brig, I'd for ever be looking behind me toward the fore hatch, through which Mr. Bates must emerge. Saving that time that I waited for the decision of the jury in the Old Bailey, I had never suffered such agony of suspense. Was Nodder dictating to Mr. Bates at this instant? If so, what was he saying? Convicting himself and Rotch of as shocking a perjury as any in the criminal records, or declaring that the evidence he and the other had given was true? Would the sullen, drunken, dying animal dictate at all when Bates sat beside him ready to write? These were distracting thoughts, and I walked the deck like one distraught. I did not want to see Mr. Bates too soon; I dreaded his emergence, for that would signify the villain had fallen stubborn and mute, and yet my

impatience was an anguish ; again and again I'd stop in the cabin doorway to look at the clock. Collins, who could see the time through the window, exclaimed : ' It's after four. Will Mr. Johnstone relieve me ? '

' Wait for Mr. Bates,' said I ; and I started off afresh on my gangway march.

At last, on a sudden, I saw Mr. Bates's face in the hatch ; he gravely motioned me to approach ; when I had drawn near he said : ' It's all right ; I have it down. It's a complete acquittal. What a piece of villainy ! Pray run aft now, put Captain Butler to the wheel, and bring Johnstone and Collins into the forecastle to hear what's been written, to witness Nodder's signature, and to sign their own names.'

I sped to the cabin and ran breathless into Tom's berth. I put my hand upon his shoulder and shook him violently. He opened his eyes and instantly started up, collecting his wits with the nimble dexterity of one used to instant and urgent calls.

' Nodder has confessed ! ' I cried. ' Bates has it down in writing ; he wants Will and me

and Collins in the fore-castle as witnesses. Jump up and take the wheel whilst I call Will.'

Before the words were fairly off my lips he was out of his bunk, pulling on his coat. I rushed to Will's cabin and dragged the dear boy half out of bed in my eagerness to awaken and get him forward quickly. His berth was next to Rotch's; the bulkhead between was stout, but a voice exerted strongly was easily to be heard through the partition. I cried out in loud, clear tones that Nodder had confessed Tom's innocence, that Mr. Bates had taken his statement down in writing, and that he (Will) was instantly required in the fore-castle.

Tom was at the wheel. He had sent Collins forward. Will and I ran to the fore-castle hatch and descended. I found myself in a small, gloomy, wooden cave; a lamp burning with a large, dim, smoky flame swayed at the end of a lanyard under a grimy central beam. Some bunks were built on either hand of this fore-castle. The place contained a sea-chest or two left by the sailors,

some remains of bedding, a few odds and ends of wearing apparel. Mr. Bates sat upon a chest under the lamp; a bunk-board he had used as a writing-desk stood before him. He held a sheet of foolscap paper.

In a bunk immediately abreast lay Nodder. I could not distinguish much of the man. An old blanket partially covered him. His arms, clothed in a sleeve-waistcoat, lay outside the blanket. His colour was sickly, dingy, hideous. His long red hair, like peelings and slicings of carrots, stood harsh and stiff about his brow and coiled wire-like upon the bolster. His wall eye seemed to be fastened upon me; the other looked straight up. Collins stood near the mate, who, on our descending, exclaimed :

‘I’ll read this confession aloud, that Nodder may hear it’s all right. He’ll then sign, and we four’ll witness.’

Here Nodder turned his head and said :
‘Who’s that female?’

‘The lady Captain Butler’s to be married to,’ answered Mr. Bates.

‘Didn’t know there was e’er a woman

aboard,' said Nodder, speaking as though his throat was raw with drink. Nothing so harsh, rasping, sawlike, did I ever hear.

I got my disgust under and stepped close to the villain. 'I hope you don't suffer much?' I said softly and kindly.

'I do, then,' he answered. 'When there's hell in the belly and hell in the heart, there's bound to be suffering. It was all along of that Rotch. Toon up, Mr. Bates, and let's get the gallus job over.'

I drew back. The having such a face as his near me made me feel sick. Then, again, the atmosphere of his bunk was charged with a smell of spirits, and reminded me of the fumes which rose through the *Childe Harold's* skylights that night we left her.

Mr. Bates, standing up, read aloud, in a solemn and emphatic manner, as follows:—

'September 27, 1835, Samuel Rotch, mate of the barque *Arab Chief*, comes to me, Benjamin Nodder, carpenter of the said ship, then sitting in my berth forward, smoking a pipe, and asked me if I'd give that matter

he'd talked to me afore on another thought. I says yes, and in consideration of his promises I was agreeable to help him, but he must contrive the job so artfully as to make sure I shouldn't get into trouble. He answers that there could be no risks at all; him and me would be witnesses, and we would take some of the sailors into the lazarette to hear the water running in, and then carry them to Captain Butler's berth, where we'd find the treenail auger, the sailors looking on. Captain Thomas Butler was master of the said barque *Arab Chief*. The understanding was this: If the plot answered and Rotch got command he was to use his interest and make me mate under him. He was likewise to pay me fifty pounds on our return to England. This money's still a-owing: he was always putting off the payment with promises, and swore when we started that he'd tell down the money in Spanish dollars at Callao, to which port the *Arab Chief* was bound when she was burned. It was likewise agreed that I was to have the run of the spirits after we had confined Captain Butler to his cabin.

Rotch told me that the punishment for scuttling a ship was light, not like the punishment for actually sinking of her. I didn't suppose it would come to a term of transportation, or I swear by the blood of my heart I'd never have done it. It was to be a small punishment, Rotch says, that would put Butler out of the way for a spell—long enough to enable Rotch to get command and to give me a berth at good wages. I made the holes and plugged the inner skin, and Rotch hid the auger. It was all Rotch's planning, and I helped. I'd have owned up several times when we were going home in the ship-of-war along with Captain Butler for the trial, but Rotch told me it was too late, that I'd already committed perjury before the Consul at Rio, and both him and me stood to be transported for life if I confessed. Captain Butler was nothing to me one way or the other; I never liked nor disliked him. Rotch, he hated the man; never said why. I allow he was ate up with jealousy; from his toes to his hair he was fired with it. I'll make no excuses for myself. Drink was at bottom and not caring.

I never reckoned it would have come to fourteen years' transportation. I hope this here confession will clear Captain Butler's character, and set him right again in the eyes of the world. And now, willing to sign this document in the presence of witnesses, I've got nothing more to say.'

Bates ceased to read.

'Someone fill my pannikin,' said Nodder. 'Hearing that yarn over again's taken it out of me.'

Bates pointed to a bottle; Will mixed a draught, and Nodder, sitting up, lifted the pannikin with both hands, trembling violently.

I had listened with a mad heart; recollection of what Tom had been made to suffer by that foul, drunken, hideous scoundrel rushed upon me. The villain had owned it was drink and not caring; he had done it for a promise of fifty pounds and the run of the rum casks and a mate's berth at some hundred shillings a month! I could have torn the poisonous rat's eyes out as he lay, and turned my back upon him to hide my face.

He threw the pannikin he had emptied on to the deck : and said : ‘Gi’ me hold of a pen whilst I’m setting up ; it’ll be a bruisy queer scrawl. What music’s a-playing that these hands keep dancing ?’ He looked at his fingers with a horrid grin.

Bates put the bunk-board on the fellow’s knees, and called to Will to hold the lamp close. My temper was under control again, and I looked at the man as he sat up in his bunk, fearing that even now he might cheat us by refusing to sign, though I supposed that, in any case, the confession made to Mr. Bates, and heard read aloud by us in Nodder’s presence, would be counted good evidence.

The man’s hand trembled so violently that twice or thrice he let fall the pen. ‘Hold my wrist,’ said he, with a vile oath. Helped by Mr. Bates, he scrawled his name ; we then signed as witnesses, Bates leading, Collins ending with a cross ; the date was added, the name of the brig, her situation at noon.

Nodder had fallen back, and lay watching us while we signed. As Mr. Bates handed me the written confession, the fellow in his

raw, squawking voice exclaimed: 'Mix me another pannikin, one of yer; then clear out. You've got what you want, ha'n't you?'

I passed through the hatch quickly, fearful of the man's language; Will accompanied me. I glanced at him in the bright western daylight; he looked shocked, almost stunned.

'I always knew he was innocent,' he exclaimed.

But I was mad to join Tom. I held up the paper as I ran towards the wheel, at which stood Tom's fine commanding figure, solitary on the brig's decks. He was pale, and the shadow of bitter expectation lay like a scowl or frown upon him.

'Has he confessed?' he said.

'Yes.'

Will took the wheel, and I followed my sweetheart into the cabin. He put the paper upon the table, and bent his head to read the precious document. I watched his face with impassioned intentness. I thought he had read to the end of the writing when he lifted his head; he rubbed his eyes and pressed his temples betwixt his hands, bent his head to

the paper again, and now I was very sure he had not read a quarter down.

Mr. Bates came along the deck and entered the cabin door ; I put my finger to my lips, and he halted close behind Tom, who seemed not to have heard him come. In this manner three or four minutes passed, neither Bates nor I speaking, and Tom appearing to read. My sweetheart then fetched a deep breath, and, looking round to me without seeing Bates, he said : ‘ That such a man should have had it in his power to injure me so ! ’ I saw a mist in his eyes, and his breathing was laboured ; then perceiving Bates he grasped him by both hands.

‘ Dear friend,’ he cried, ‘ it is a ruined, broken-hearted convict sailor who thanks you ! ’

‘ No more of that, Butler, for my sake,’ answered the mate. ‘ You are no convict, and your heart’s not broken. All’s well with us now, and I’ll be dancing at your wedding very soon.’

‘ I was innocent ! I was always innocent ! I told you so ! ’ cried Tom.

‘Did I ever doubt it, Butler?’ exclaimed the mate. ‘And this lady’s marvellous devotion! Match me such perfect faith, such beautiful loyalty.’

Tom stretched out his arms, and in a moment I was locked to his heart.

CHAPTER XLV

SHE CONCLUDES HER STORY

PRESENTLY the mate told us of the trouble Nodder had cost him; how at one moment the sulky villain bade him fetch paper and pen, for that he meant to confess; how, as Bates sprang to the hatch, the fellow rasped out that he had changed his mind—bruised if he was going to confess. Butler had never offered him an extra glass of grog all the time they were together; it was for Rotch to own up, not him. First let him hear what Rotch had to say. This went on till Bates, losing his temper, told him he had as good as confessed already; if he refused to dictate the confession civilly asked of him, he (that is, Bates) would quit the forecastle, clap the hatch on, leave him to crawl about in the dark, stop his supply of rum, and in every way abandon him to a dreadful and miserable

fate. ‘You’ve no friend on board but myself,’ Bates told him. ‘But for me you’d get nothing to eat or drink. If Rotch confesses first, he’ll put in a claim as Queen’s evidence, the whole burden of this enormous crime will be laid upon your shoulders, and whilst I’ll take my oath that the punishment for it is nothing less than the hulks and transportation for life, I’ll not swear, as I’m no lawyer, that it isn’t a hanging offence. Then I bade him think of Rotch’s promise of fifty pounds, and of the horrible mess that villain had got him into, and by degrees so worked upon him as to bring up his meanderings at last with a round turn. “Jaw me no more!” growled the beggar. “Go and fetch the smotherin’ writing-gear!” And there it is,’ said the mate, with a smile, pointing to the table.

In this while the sun was beyond north-west and reddening rapidly, and now whilst we listened to Mr. Bates the wind breezed up in a shrill puff that heeled the vessel and despatched Tom and the mate with a little run on deck. I took Nodder’s confession and

stowed it carefully away along with Collins's deposition. My heart was full of fire and rejoicing; I raged at the thought of Tom having been ruined by two such detestable, contemptible villains as Rotch and Nodder, and I exulted in knowing that it was now in our power to bring both men to justice whether Rotch confessed or not.

Whilst they looked after the brig I prepared the evening repast in the galley. A little before six we sat down to supper. It was then blowing no more than a pleasant fresh wind; a long swell hurled the brig forward, ^{and then back} and she drove along under a maintopgallant-sail, whitening out twice her breadth of water as she sped curtseying onwards. Tom, Bates, and I seated ourselves, Collins steered, and Will kept a look-out on the top of the house.

I got ready a small tray of food for Rotch; Bates was carrying it to the fellow's berth when Tom stopped him to say: 'Tell him that Nodder's confessed, but add little or nothing to that, Bates. Let the fact sink with him. Whilst we sup we'll talk things over.'

The mate returned after a very short absence, and quietly took his place at table.

‘Did you tell him?’ said Tom. Bates answered, ‘Yes.’

‘What did he say?’

‘He eyed me with a wicked look and made no reply. His eyes have gone blood-shot and shine queerly. There’s a hardness in that chap’s countenance that makes me believe he’ll never shell out.’

‘It will not matter,’ said I, ‘we have evidence enough. They’ll never refuse us a free pardon on what we have.’

‘A free pardon!’ exclaimed Tom, looking at me.

‘Yes—certainly,’ said Mr. Bates, gravely cutting himself a piece of salt beef; ‘your innocence is already established; nothing to go through now but a sort of form which the lawyers will put you up to.’

‘Uncle Johnstone will do everything for us,’ said I; ‘and, oh!’ I half shrieked, clapping my hands, ‘the joy I shall feel in seeing him read Nodder’s confession!’

Tom’s face was moody and dark.

‘I’ll not ask for nor would I accept a free pardon!’ he exclaimed. ‘For what am I to be pardoned, and what to me would be the particular virtue of a pardon?’ he added sarcastically. ‘When I sailed out of the Thames in a convict ship, I left England for ever. What could induce me to dwell in a land I abominate, among a people I detest?’

‘A very natural prejudice, Butler,’ said Bates, ‘under the circumstances; but it will wear off.’

‘Marian,’ said Tom, ‘whatever else I may do, whatever else may happen to me, I shall never again live in England.’

‘Be it so, dear.’

‘I could rant and talk like a stage-tragedy man on that subject,’ he continued. ‘We’ll hold Nodder’s, and, if we can get it, we’ll hold Rotch’s confession. We’ll take very great care of them indeed. Oh, yes; they shall be as precious—as precious—as what, Bates? Well, let’s say Bank of England notes of the highest value; because they might yet prove serviceable by enabling me to deal with that ruffian blunderer called British law, should its

blind-guided hand make for my throat again in the distant place where you and I may settle, Marian. But I'll have no asking for a pardon.'

'We're a long way from home yet,' said Bates. 'The sight of the north star is bound to work a change in your humour, Butler.'

'Bates, you don't know what you're talking about!' exclaimed Tom. 'Keep this in mind, that under any circumstances I'd sooner cut my throat than sue for pardon for sins I'm guiltless of. But when you talk of Nodder's confession you forget this: First, if I return to England, I'm a returned convict at large during sentence, which is a felony punishable by transportation for life. Next, they'd charge me with piracy and bloodshed as being concerned with others in seizing the transport *Childe Harold*. Those are what Johnstone's father would call "counts," I suppose. Is Nodder's confession going to carry me clear of them?'

'I was mate of the transport, Butler,' said Mr. Bates. 'Then there's young Johnstone, who was an apprentice. Would not our evi-

dence weigh? We could prove you innocent of complicity in that seizure, and tell a story that should do you honour—how you saved my life; how you forced the convicts to yield up the women and children.'

'I want no pardon! I'd take none!' cried Tom, striking the table with his fist. 'I'll never live in England again. I'll take a new name under any flag that flies, and the flag whose people hate the English most is the flag I'll love best.'

'Then,' said Mr. Bates, looking at me, 'I don't see what's the good of Butler troubling himself to extort a confession from Rotch.'

'Rotch! yes!' cried Tom, shouting his words in a sudden fury. 'He'll have to confess! He must confirm Nodder's statement and whitewash me with another coat for your edification, and to enable young Johnstone to put a bit more of accent and colour into the yarn he'll spin his father and his mother. I'll keep him till he does, and, by God's thunder, I'll hang him if he doesn't!'

'Mr. Bates,' said I, 'you have managed

marvellously well with Nodder. Surely you'll bring the other wretch to confess.'

'Read Nodder's statement to him,' said Tom.

'He might snatch it from me and destroy it,' said the mate. 'There should be two of us.'

'Will's too young!' I exclaimed.

'I'll go with you,' said Tom.

They settled it so, and fixed six o'clock for the visit.

We were so slender a company in that brig that I was often put to the wheel; I never regularly stood a trick, as sailors say; when they were all wanted I steered till one of them relieved me. I went to the helm to send Collins on the deck-house top that Will might get his supper. As I quitted the cabin Bates and Tom went to Rotch's berth. There was some noise in the wind at this hour; the breeze blew fresh, the short seas ran sharp and burst shrilly, the race of foam on either hand sent up a note of boiling, there was much merry whistling in the rigging, and a faint small thunder of wind sweeping out of the hollows through the curved foot of the sails.

So it happened that I could hear but little of what passed in the cabin. The wheel was small ; I gripped it strongly ; I put my mind into the binnacle stand and watched the card very earnestly, that the brig should not run away with me.

Twenty minutes might thus have passed when I heard noises that rose high above the sound of the sea and the cries in the rigging. Will shouted, ‘Marian, there’s murder doing !’

I dared not let go of the wheel lest the vessel should broach to and lose her spars. I shrieked with all my might to Collins, who came running headlong down the steps.

‘Take the helm,’ I cried, and I sprang through the cabin door.

At that instant Tom and Bates came out of Rotch’s berth. The mate turned the key and thrust his shoulder against the door to make sure all was fast. Tom held a handkerchief to his jaw. He removed it to look at it; it was stained with blood.

‘What has happened?’ I called out.

‘He jumped upon me, threw me down,

and his teeth met in my cheek—a true hound of hounds, a very dog of very dogs,’ said Tom.

I drew his hand from his face and witnessed the marks of a severe bite above the right jaw ; a little blood flowed.

‘It is nothing at all,’ said he. ‘But how consistent is his trick of fighting with the nature of the animal!’

I hastened to the galley for some warm water, carefully bathed the wound, and bound it up. Mr. Bates, whose face was very pale, had gone on deck to look after the brig ; he now returned and found Tom at the table with his face swathed.

‘Has the villain gone mad?’ said I.

‘Butler,’ said the mate, ‘the sight of you and your talking to him drove him mad. I feared it. That man’ll never confess.’

‘He’ll hang then,’ said Tom in a fierce, muttering voice.

‘In the face of Nodder’s confession,’ cried Mr. Bates, with more excitement in his manner than I had ever before witnessed, ‘the scoundrel swears that Butler was guilty of the attempt. When we entered I addressed

him quietly, almost soothingly; Butler did not speak, he stood in readiness to prevent Rotch from snatching Nodder's confession out of my hands. I read the carpenter's statement. He listened with his head hung. When I had ended, Butler said to him: "You see now how it has worked out. When do you intend to make your declaration to Mr. Bates?" The man in an instant leaped upon Butler and bore him to the deck. I got hold of his throat to drag him away, and saw the devil's teeth in Butler's cheek. I'm an old sea-going hand, Miss Johnstone, and have been forced to listen to some bad language in my time, but never heard I the like of what left Rotch's lips after I had choked him off Butler and flung him aside. His brain's giving way,' said he, addressing Tom.

'If he's mad,' I exclaimed, heartily frightened, 'his bite may have poisoned you, Tom.'

'He's dog-like enough,' said he, 'but I don't fear his teeth. Bates, you forgot to tell Miss Johnstone that before he sprang upon me he called out, "You made the attempt,"

using one of the choicest of his diabolical expressions.'

'We have Nodder's confession,' I exclaimed.

'But he shall confess—he shall confess,' said Tom, with deep and thrilling intensity of tone; 'I have him—he can never escape me. He shall confess, or he swings for it by my hand as surely as God's his judge.'

Saying this, he left the table and went on deck.

'Mr. Bates,' said I, 'how is the man to be brought to own his crime?'

The mate looked at me earnestly and slowly and shook his head.

'He'll go out of his mind,' said he. 'That's often how God punishes the like of such wretches. He may confess as a madman, but never while his wits yield light enough to hold his hate in sight. Hate! Why, with him the deadliest of human passions lives wrapped up, pure and unalloyed, in flesh, stalking on two legs, and calling itself Rotch.'

He left me, and for many minutes I stood

alone, leaning with my hand upon the cabin table, lost in deep and distracting thought.

It so befell, however, that we were not long to wait before this degrading, loathsome and maddening business of Rotch was settled for us, and this without any demand upon our own ingenuity, though the thing worked out to its issue in strict correspondence with the inhuman devil's nature and with all that is base and wretched in this narrative. Whether the man had been a little mad at the root all through; whether he really feared that Tom would execute his threat and hang him; whether he supposed that, taking it that Tom did not hang him, he would be fearfully punished for the conspiracy and perjury which Nodder had deposed to; or whether his conscience, working like a fiend, grew too strong for him during his long, solitary hours of imprisonment, he, one day, fulfilled the prediction of the mate and went mad.

We were then in the northern verge of the south-east trade-wind, sweeping smoothly toward the Equator. I was asleep in my cabin, and was awakened by a great disturb-

ance and shouts. The hour was some time in the afternoon. By the time I had put on my dress and run out, the cries and sounds of scuffling had ceased ; but on stepping a few paces aft, I heard a strange noise of moaning and snapping yells proceeding from Rotch's cabin. It was such a noise as might be made by a couple of dogs, who, though half dead with worrying each other, still fight on.

I ran to the wheel, where I found Will, who told me that while Bates was in Rotch's cabin, whither he had carried some drinking water, Rotch, giving a loud shout, whipped a table knife out of his bunk ; he lunged at Bates, who very nimbly tripped him up, got the knife out of his hand, and lay wrestling on the deck with Rotch, bawling for help. Tom and Collins rushed to his assistance, and amongst them dragged the villain into his berth again.

Whilst Will was telling me this, Tom and the others came out of Rotch's cabin. And now I heard that the man had gone mad, and that to prevent him doing himself or us a mischief

they had secured his legs and bound his arms to his side.

This was a very great calamity ; had he jumped overboard or cut his throat all would have been well, but here now was a madman to watch. Our little ship's company was miserably few, and the requirements of the brig totally prohibited our telling off any one of us to look after the lunatic fiend. Then again, being mad, his confession (whatever might prove the delirious gabble he chose to regale Mr. Bates with) could be of no use to Tom, who would thus be balked in his iron-hard resolve of carrying him to some part of the seas where he could hang him if he did not confess.

But it was not a thing to be mended by lamentation ; whilst madness raged in the unhappy, wicked wretch, he was to be kept bound, and rendered as helpless by cords and lines as Tom in his sanity had been by leg-irons and handcuffs. Mr. Bates from time to time looked in upon him, cut up his meat, fed him, and gave him drink. I never went near the monster's cabin nor set eyes upon

him. If Tom looked in, Rotch spat at him, howled, expressed by contortions and grimaces a hundred hellish passions, and struggled with fury and with the power of a giant to liberate himself that he might get at him. The madman's cabin door was in various ways strengthened to provide against all possibility of his breaking out. Otherwise he lay lodged as securely as if his prison had been the sentinelled and barricaded 'tweendecks of the *Childe Harold*.

This was his condition for about a week, dating from the hour of his going mad; Bates then told us that the fellow was cooling down and exhibiting some return of mind; a small light of intelligence was in his eyes, and the fire of insanity was waning in them. He begged for the freedom of his limbs, and Bates gave him the use of his arms. One morning the mate came out of Rotch's berth, and said to me, who was sitting at the cabin table :

'A strange change has come over that miserable creature. He cries like a whipped boy, and his mind seems in a state of panic

terror. He lay hold of my hand just now and wriggled as though to fall upon his knees, and implored me not to let Captain Butler come near him. "He'll hang me," he whimpered; "that's what he's keeping me here for. Why don't he send me ashore? I'm not fit to die. I've got a wife and children dependent upon me." Then he blazed out: "But he dursn't hang me. It would be the bloodiest of all murders to swing a poor sick man like me!" And he muttered about having a house of furniture and a little money at home, all of which he'd give me if I'd smuggle a knife into his berth, and then send Captain Butler to him alone on pretence of hearing him confess.'

It was on Friday that Bates told me this. On the following Sunday we sat down to dinner as usual at one o'clock. It was a very quiet day, clear and bright; the brig was flapping leisurely along clothed to her royals before a small air of hot wind blowing almost directly over the stern. Tom put a slice of pork on a plate, and Bates cut it up to carry it with biscuit, a pannikin of rum and water,

and other matters to Rotch's berth. The mate went to the door of Rotch's cabin, and put the tray down to turn the key and shift one of the uprights which protected the entrance. My eye was upon him ; he opened the door, cried out, and sprang back, tossing his arms with a gesture of horror and consternation.

‘What is it?’ called Tom.

‘Come and look, Butler! Come and see for yourself!’ cried the mate.

Tom rushed aft and stood beside Bates. In a moment or two he turned his face toward me and said, whilst he pointed to the cabin, with his finger a little elevated: ‘Marian, he has hanged himself!’ He then went in. Bates, with a white face, came running to the table for a knife, and then joined Tom. I sat quite still. I had not the courage to view an object which I guessed would haunt my memory as a phantom of ghastly horror whilst life lasted. My heart beat with sick, fast throbs whilst I waited. They were ten minutes in cutting him down and making sure he was dead. They then

came out, closing the door behind them, and drew slowly to the table.

‘Miss Johnstone,’ said the mate, ‘he’s stone dead.’

‘Is it not God who wins, surely and always, in the end?’ exclaimed Tom.

POSTSCRIPT

WHEN the venerable lady—the Marian Johnstone of the preceding narrative—had arrived at this point, she declined to proceed. She said she had told enough. If a sequel was necessary, it must be invented. She had several grandchildren, and she did not choose to vex or distress them by unnecessary candour.

With much coaxing, however, and during repeated visits, she let fall enough to admit of a truthful ending to her strange tale, and the few things material omitted by her were supplied by Admiralty records and certain files of shipping papers.

It seems that amongst them they safely carried the little brig *Old Stormy* to the English Channel, where, hauling in close to the French coast, they spoke a French smack, and Captain Butler went ashore to await Marian Johnstone in some French or Flemish

town that had been agreed upon. The brig then stretched across to the English coast and landed Nodder, who died twenty-four hours after his arrival in England. Then, with the assistance of a few 'longshoremen, the vessel was carried to the Thames.

Miss Johnstone at once called upon her uncle. No particulars of an interview, which surely must have been memorable and remarkable, were to be procured. Though Captain Butler had sworn that he would not accept a free pardon if it were granted, nor ever again set foot in his native country, Miss Johnstone went to work nevertheless to render him what is called by the lawyers an unattainted person. It might have been that Captain Butler knew the law better than she ; it is certain that her uncle, Mr. Johnstone, a shrewd old lawyer, gave her neither hope nor encouragement. His reasons are probably indicated in an 'opinion' he obtained from one who stood high as a legal authority in his day. The following extract may be given :

‘The unfortunate master has apparently been guilty of no less than three different

felonies within the jurisdiction of the Lord High Admiral, *i.e.* on the high seas. The three felonies are (1) scuttling, of which he is wrongfully convicted and transported; (2) being at large during a sentence of transportation without lawful excuse—felony under 5 Geo. IV., c. 84, s. 24; and (3) of being concerned with other convicts in piracy with bloodshed, under 18 Geo. II., c. 30, s. 2. As to pardons: All convictions are to be presumed, of course, to be correctly made until the contrary be shown. By 7 Geo. IV., c. 28, a warrant under the royal sign manual is equivalent to a pardon under the great seal, and this only as a pardon as to the specific felony committed by the pardoned, and does not avail as to any offence committed subsequently to that pardoned and not mentioned in the pardon.'

No he
could not
help it
But he

The seizure of the *Childe Harold* had occurred subsequently to Butler's conviction for attempting to scuttle the *Arab Chief*. He was also at large whilst still a convict. Miss Johnstone, with much spirit, but with a good deal of wrong-headed obstinacy also, persisted

in struggling in the direction of a pardon for her sweetheart until certain convincing representations finally determined her to desist. Having made all necessary arrangements with regard to her property, she joined Captain Butler abroad and was married to him. They ultimately went to the United States, and it is understood that for some years Captain Butler had command of a fine clipper ship flying the Stars and Stripes and trading between Boston and the western South American seaboard.

The award for the salving of the *Old Stormy* made a considerable sum. The cargo proved to be exceedingly valuable. Some of the pictures were by great masters, and the consignment of china alone was valued at eleven thousand pounds. Captain Butler, through Miss Johnstone, refused to touch one penny of the award ; the money was therefore paid in sums proportioned by the rating to Mr. Bates, Will Johnstone, and the man Collins.

It is remarkable that the cabin story of the abandonment of the *Old Stormy* proved absolutely true. A single survivor of the

crew was rescued ; he was carried to Sierra Leone, where he died ; before he died he detailed the facts of the mutiny, murders, and abandonment, precisely as they were recited in the document found in the brig.

The *Childe Harold* was fallen in with by a large heavily armed Portuguese man-of-war, thirty leagues west of the island of Tristan d'Acunha. She had been wrecked aloft in a gale ; the convicts were in terrible distress, they were short of water, they had wantonly wasted the ship's stock of provisions. The commander of the Portuguese ship perceiving the vessel's character sent a number of armed men on board, and then, strangely enough, towed her for a supply of fresh water to Tristan d'Acunha, where both ships arrived three weeks after the departure of the *Old Stormy* from that island. The transport was then conveyed to Table Bay, refitted, placed in charge of a new captain and officers along with a strong crew, and despatched on her voyage to Hobart Town, where she safely arrived. How the ringleaders were punished has not been ascertained.

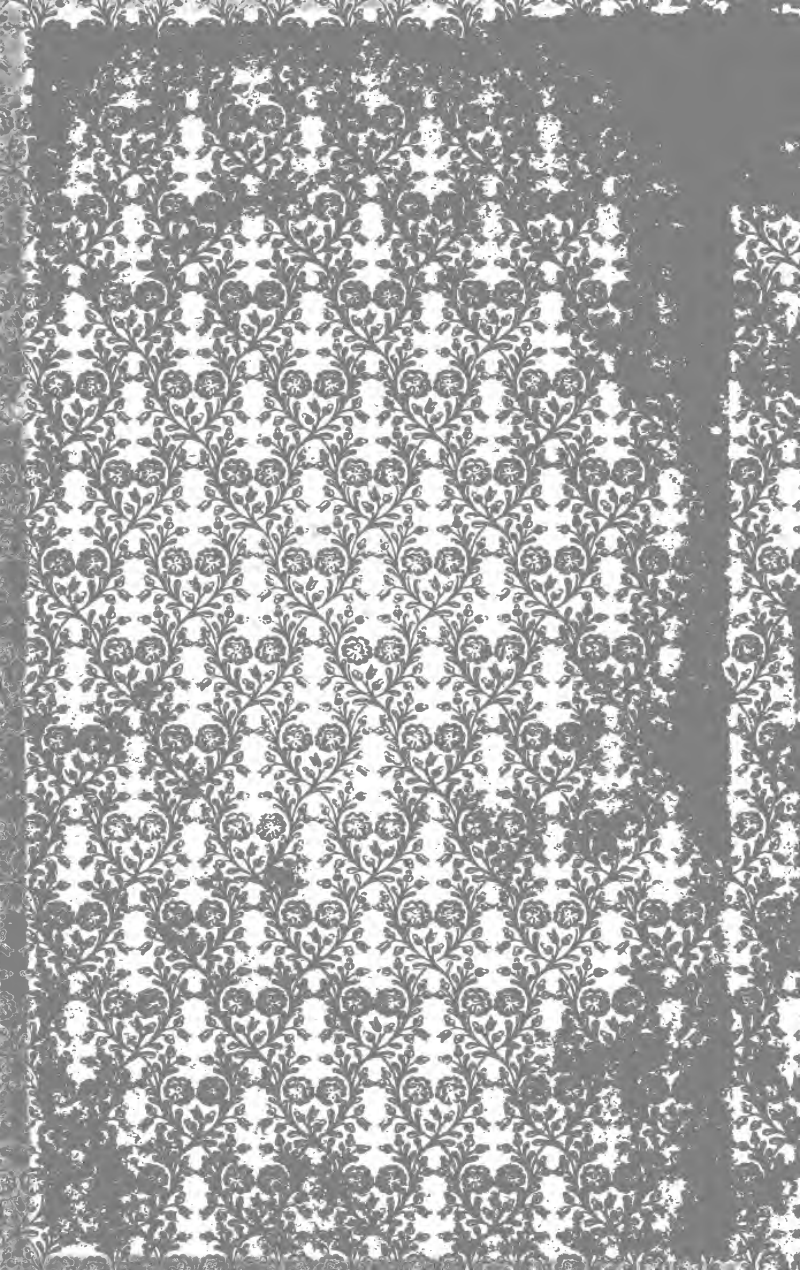
The long-boat, containing Captain Sutherland, Captain Barrett, the soldiers, women and children, was fallen in with in seven or eight degrees north latitude, and the people, who were all in good health in spite of great sufferings from exposure—one death only, a child, having happened—were carried round the Horn before there occurred an opportunity to tranship and send them home. But the quarter-boats in which the seamen had been sent adrift were never accounted for.

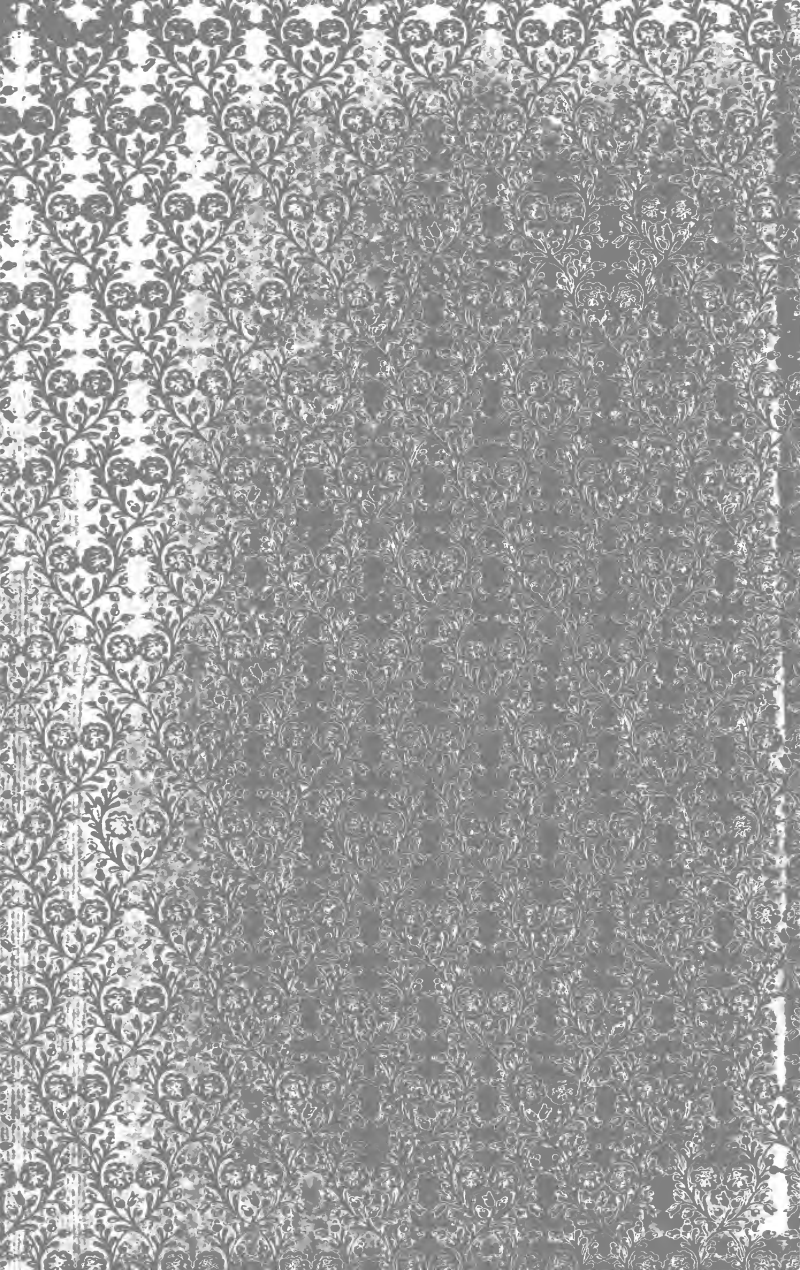
This, then, is the true sequel of the extraordinary adventures of the remarkable young woman who has been styled in this narrative of her experiences Marian Johnstone.

THE END

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